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University of Alberta

Reading Heroines Reading: Female Identity and Romance

by

Susan Gray Hillabold

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1995

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Reading Heroines Reading: Female Identity and Romance** submitted by **Susan Gray Hillabold** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**.

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Dr Isobel Grundy

Dr Susan Hamilton

Dr James McTeague

September 15, 1995

Dr Rachel Brownstein

Dedication

For Jim Zaleschuk

who always believes what I read is important

Abstract

Heroines, reading about other fictional heroines, construct themselves as heroines of their own romances. Reading, a process of gaining self-awareness, provides an alternative education to women. For them, reading romances is a means of empowerment because they, like the romancer, create worlds through the interpretation of words on a page and they gain pleasure from the reading experience. Focussing on four novels written by women, my argument asserts that these heroines, often reading the disparaged romance, can see themselves replicated in other texts, thereby confirming their own view of the world.

Chapter One studies the complexity of romances, highlighting the articulation of violence and woman's imagination. The paradox of romance is that it focusses on the outside world and on its own construction. Similarly, it underscores the heroine's isolation by the reading process and her ultimate integration into society. Woman's identification with and enjoyment of the romance, characterized by violence, isolation, imagination, and female empowerment, challenges the traditional interpretation of woman as passive and passionless.

My chapters on Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* (1864) argue that the interpretation of these two novels as parodies of the reading woman needs revising. Both women finally are rewarded, and it is their interpretation of the world which appears more accurate.

Chapters four and five, on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), the two *Bildungsromane*, show the way Jane's and Maggie's life journeys mirror the fictions they read. I draw parallels between

specific books in their libraries and events in their lives. Jane writes her life as an adaptation of fairy tales, romances, and religious texts, surviving the various plots of manipulating men. In contrast, Maggie Tulliver, who initially imagines endings, succumbs to the tragic plots she reads or is told because she loses the ability to rewrite stories. Her death suggests the importance of women's interpretations of the fictions they read in reclaiming their identities. Maggie's inability to read the endings to various romances suggests that she too will end in a void.

Acknowledgements

No one writes alone. My friends and colleagues have given me the strength and academic wealth that has made this possible. I owe much to Garry Sherbert and Troni Grande, who stimulated me, academically and emotionally, to finish this project. Always, the Edmonton Friday night *Star Trek: the Next Generation* crew, Teya Rosenberg and Deborah Wills, who went on before me, will be fellow discoverers of new spaces. Having left *Star Trek* in Edmonton, I have since discovered the Regina Friday (k)nights at the round table with the encouraging camaraderie of Heather Hodgson and Běla Szabados, Florence Stratton, and Joan Sandomirsky.

Behind the names on dissertations are the invaluable librarians who, like detectives, can discover amazing information. Jeannine Green, of the University of Alberta Bruce Peel Special Collections library, has helped me discover gems of the past. At the University of Regina, Larry McDonald, who knows everything about libraries and computers, has sleuthed his way through computer indexes and on-line libraries to find answers for me. Gordon Priest, the anarchist (or should I say god?) of the circulation desk at the University of Regina, has more than once provided me with an electronic existence, without which I would not have been able to sign out books. Finally, Astrid Blodgett and Mary Marshall Durrell, University of Alberta Department of English assistants, through email, have ensured I kept connected and informed.

Electronic Mail has let me keep in touch with many friends who have supported and advised me during this writing: Teresa Alm, Mary Chapman, David Lamb and Claire McCartney (whose hobby as perpetual renovators, with sledge hammers and plaster, has a parallel with academics), Lisa Laframboise (who physically

ensured I was registered in the program), Jane Macgrath (who is always willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of a party), Deborah McLeod, Geoff McMaster and Gail Sobat, Faith Nostbakken, Karen Overbye (who like me is always on the verge of having a nap), Nancy and Michael Parke-Taylor, Christine Sommerfeldt, Mary Beth Wolicky, and Kate Woodman. I have taken the time and received the inspiration from a great many people whose names would require another chapter. I thank them all.

On a more immediate connection, I am grateful for the encouragement I have received from my parents, the wordsmith Jane Hillabold and the old curmudgeon Art Hillabold, and for the numerous conversations from fellow Sunday morning cycling enthusiasts Jeannie Mah and Ed Jones, and Ruth Chambers. On this level, I also want to squeeze (in) Jim Zaleschuk who is proof that men today can still be heroes.

Finally, I want to thank my committee: Susan Hamilton for her comments; and Juliet McMaster and Isobel Grundy, who, as real-life reading heroines, have guided me through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As mentors in the profession, they have inspired me and will continue to do so.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One
Female Identity and Romance 1

Chapter Two
The Power of Romance: *The Female Quixote* 24

Chapter Three
Controlling the Imagination: Education in *The Doctor's Wife* 58

Chapter Four
Rewriting the Romance in *Jane Eyre* 105

Chapter Five
The Blank Page: Maggie's Reading in *The Mill on the Floss* 160

Epilogue 199

Appendix 1
Tail-pieces from Bewick's *History of British Birds* 203

Appendix 2
"Ducking a Witch" from *The History of the Devil* (1819 edition) 209

Appendix 3
Synopses of Operas 210
1. Vincenzo Bellini, *La Sonnambula* (The Sleepwalker) (1831) 210
2. Daniel François Auber, *Masaniello* (*La Muette de Portici*) (1828) 211
3. Michael William Balfe, *The Maid of Artois* (1836) 212

Works Cited 215

Chapter One

Female Identity and Romance

> The point of view in which this tale comes under the Romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very present that is flitting away from us. It is a legend prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the reader, according to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events for the sake of a picturesque effect. The narrative, it may be, is woven of so humble a texture as to require this advantage, and, at the same time, to render it the more difficult of attainment.
>
> Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Preface," *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851)

Choosing my topic for this dissertation was not hard, since I always saw myself as a reader, primarily addicted to fiction. Choosing the primary texts, on the other hand, was a more arduous task. Every time I picked up a novel to read, I found another reading heroine. The reading heroine proliferates, as a phenomenon, from the eighteenth century to now. I soon realized that a heroine, in order to be one, often is a reader first and, more importantly, a reader of romances. Her reading becomes a process of gaining intellectual and especially emotional self-awareness. For my heroines, reading romances, in particular, is a sign of empowerment, especially when they see themselves reflected in the texts they read; they can create themselves as heroines or, like the romancer, create worlds through the interpretation of words on a page; and they gain pleasure from the reading experience. Thus, reading becomes a direct threat to men who exercise hegemony over women's self-image, including the subversive sexual self. Reading often violent romances, heroines can release their repressed desires through the imaginary. Romance becomes a tool that shapes the

lives of heroines, for it allows them to envision a world where they are free to exercise their feelings and talents. In Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), Arabella learns from Scudéry's lengthy romances that heroines do have power in romances; in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife* (1864), Isabel's "real" life experiences confirm that life sometimes does imitate art. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane completes her journey by rewriting the various plots offered her, such as Richardson's *Pamela*; and in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Maggie, the only tragic heroine examined in these pages, refuses to finish reading Scott's *The Pirate* and de Staël's *Corinne* because she, unlike Jane Eyre before her, has lost the ability to rewrite the text, a tragedy proving the importance of the reading/creating strategy in authenticating her identity.

The two novels I call parody novels, *The Female Quixote* (1752) and *The Doctor's Wife* (1864), spanning over a century, draw on Cervantes' Don Quixote as an organizing motif. These novels appear to ridicule the woman who reads romances (the female Quixote) while also placing her in a romance and valuing her moral integrity. This literary contradiction arises from the social debate concerning women's apparent lack of reason. While men were considered to be engaged with rational thought, women, who had to be turned into consumers of fiction, were supposedly engaged on an emotional level. Timothy Reiss, in *The Meaning of Literature*, describes the seventeenth-century battle over "modern" literature as pitting the "right reason" of male writers against the emotional excess of female writers, particularly the romances of Scudéry (Reiss 200-201). This argument does not suggest that woman was without

reason. Woman's reason was described as different and better suited to her domestic role as wife and mother. The point was made that her chastity and purity, her moral integrity, were some consolation for her lack of the reason and rationality enjoyed by man. Displaced as "literary" producers, women, guided by their "intuitive sense," were installed as "ideal consumers of aesthetic works" (Reiss 211, 214). As fictional characters reading romance, a term early associated with women writers who refused to put down their pens, these reading heroines can register feminist aggression at being denied access as producers of rational, realistic fiction by elevating the imaginary and replacing the "real" with the "fantastic." Heroines read romances describing emotional, passionate, and violent excess. And by imagining their reality as one filled with equivalent plots, they can rewrite and produce what has been denigrated and thereby controlled by male critics.[1]

Not all readers of course read the same way or produce the same psychological idealisations of their world from the fiction they read. While some, according to the prevailing view of the domestic woman, may read passively, others are more active and interpretative readers. Most reading heroines, like Don Quixote before them,

---

[1] Ina Ferris, in *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels*, quotes reviews of Walter Scott's *Waverley*, placing him above the female writers of mere romances: *Waverley* "has little of the ordinary attractions of a novel to recommend it, and which will therefore probably disappoint all those readers who take it up at a circulating library, selecting it at random from amid sundry tomes of *Emmeline*, *Castel Gandolpho*, *Elegant Enthusiasts*, and *Victims of Sensibility*," and the "Luximas, the Wanderers, and the innumerable spawn of the Mysteries of Udolpho, were gradually sinking into the tomb of all the Capulets, when the author of the Scotch novels first appeared, like a giant refreshed with sleep" (qtd Ferris 82-83, 80).

emerge as the latter kind of reader, the type I call the "writerly" rather than "readerly" readers, to adapt Roland Barthes' terms.[2] They read creatively, reproducing themselves as heroines and reinterpreting their world to the extent that they are active participants.

Certainly, a heroine's existence in a "novel" and her search for her identity in "romances" suggest that these two terms are distinctly identifiable. But, here, definitions for one term can easily cover the other. For my purposes, I have found Northrop Frye's definition of romance useful and productive. In the *Anatomy of Criticism* he explains that romance, involving heroes and heroines, is a form that lies between the myth, involving gods, and the novel, involving "men" (306). Clearly, Frye's own definition slides along a continuum where, theoretically, one can imagine myth, romance, or novel as separate and distinct. But gods often fall into acting like mere mortals, and many men rise above the mundane to appear god-like. While it seems clear to earlier critics what constitutes romance and novel, I see the distinction blurred. Often romances incorporate plausible elements and novels the implausible. Michael McKeon, in *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740*, traces the passage of the heroic romance to the secret memoir as "an invisible and indeterminate divide." He explains that the seventeenth-century romance "defends itself against assault in part by becoming modestly historicized, by becoming 'antiromance'" (55).

According to Northrop Frye, romance does not deal with "real people" (a

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[2] Roland Barthes, in *S/Z*, describes the writerly text as that which can be rewritten by the reader, who then becomes a producer of meaning rather than a consumer (4). In valuing the writerly over the readerly, he says that "the writerly text is *ourselves writing*" (5, italics in text). Although Barthes uses the writerly and readerly to refer primarily to texts, I am adopting his terms for my heroines.

criticism my heroines hear all the time) but with psychological archetypes: "It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively" (*Anatomy* 304). *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Don Quixote*, *Pamela*, and *Jane Eyre*, with their more or less allegorical archetypes, are all examples of romance in which the hero(ine) seeks an idealized existence. She reads romances because they offer her fulfilment of her dreams. She can project her hopes and fears on highly stylized figures (the intelligent heroine, virtuous hero, and threatening villain). Her reward for surpassing obstacles is often, as in the case of Pamela, marriage. A metaphorical union or integration, "marriage" at the end of the romance signals her ideal achieved.[3]

Each novel, referring to previous romances, reveals a self-awareness of its own organizing structure. According to Linda Hutcheon in *Narcissistic Narrative: the Metafictional Paradox*, romances which are explicitly self-reflexive are "overtly narcissistic texts" (7). All four romances continually force the reader to be conscious of the romance tradition. This narrative narcissism suggests a paradox, since romance is focussed both inwardly on itself and outwardly on the reader. While the reader accepts that the language or text is fictional, she is still drawn into the plot, forced to participate, intellectually and imaginatively, in its "co-creation" (Hutcheon 7). The heroine's participation in creating her own romance implies that romance itself becomes its own subject.

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[3] Even death, as in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, rewards the pilgrims after their fatiguing journey. Beyond the Celestial gates, Christian and Christiana find union with God, the Father.

As its own subject, the romance allows itself to be reproduced and mirrored in countless permutations; hence the proliferation of the Don Quixote figure and the subsequent reading heroine. The romance tradition, beginning with the Christian hero and developing into the secular Don Quixote, is always imitating itself. The reader-protagonist reads romances that reflect or mirror the plot in which the heroine exists. Thus Arabella's plot reflects the plots she reads. Isabel is not only the heroine of *The Doctor's Wife*, but also the prototype of the heroine in the fictional author's sensational novels. Jane and Maggie, both readers of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a Christian quest romance, must also fulfil their own quests.

The romance is a mirror for my readers, who are drawn into the romance's process of idealization. In the fictional characters of the romances they read, they see themselves as heroines. Despite being stylized psychological archetypes, they are still individualized. In fact, the conventions of romance characterization have been well established since the Greek romances, long before the appearance of the eighteenth-century novel. Carla Peterson, agreeing with Frye in the *Anatomy*, has argued that, because of its heroine's identification with other heroines, the romance was the first psychological novel, a point that Langbauer, in her study of *The Female Quixote*, intimates when reconstructing this early battle for literary supremacy between the two supposedly distinct genres. The romance is concerned with "the history of both individual and culture" (Peterson 20); it shows how the individual is constructed in society; and it turns to the past (what is always already written) to understand the present. That the romance constitutes the individual in society certainly shifts the

focus from fantasy to reality, a shift which undermines the traditional definition of romance as fantasy and novel as realism.[4]

By looking into this idealized "mirror," these reading heroines are, to borrow Foucault's description of Don Quixote, "made up of interwoven words" from interwoven texts from the past. Repeating language from other literary texts, these heroines constitute writing itself, which will be passed down to other readers of romances. Jane Eyre, living a version of the *Pamela* plot, reads Pamela reading romances; and, like Pamela before her, Jane, who will later give her name to her romance, will write of her adventures for some future woman to read. Their adventures in the novels I examine become a justification of their own reading practices. They will decipher the world, looking for signs in everyday experiences as proof of the authenticity of their romances. Foucault argues that Don Quixote's adventures "must be proof" of the chivalric ideal: each exploit "consists, not in a real triumph--which is why victory is not really important--but in an attempt to transform reality into a sign" (Foucault 47). Reality, rather than language, becomes the sign of this golden ideal. Readers will compare reality to the world in their fictions and find some disparity between reality and language, a contradiction which is exactly what romances, such as *Don Quixote*, have warned will happen. The romances they read,

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[4] Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel*, defines the novel as fiction which deals with the individual's experience rather than the collective tradition (Watt 14, 15, 17-18). For Watt the main characteristic of the realistic novel is that it emphasizes the individual. In contrast, the "earlier literary tradition" (in which I suspect he places the romance) stresses the collective (Watt 22-27).

therefore, are mirrors of their idealized world.[5] This is clearly articulated by Cervantes in his Part Two of Don Quixote's adventures, written twelve years after the first part. In Part One of *Don Quixote*, Quixote looks for signs in the world around him to prove that his chivalric romances are truthful. In Part Two, however, Don Quixote becomes the living embodiment of his textual representative in the "History" of Part One. The characters of Part Two, who have read Cide Hamete Benengeli's "History" of Don Quixote comprising Part One, continually refer the present Don Quixote (of Part Two) to his earlier, fictional self (of Part One). In Part Two, Don Quixote sometimes corrects the historian's interpretation of "facts" in Part One. Because the romance deals with the individual "idealized by revery," anything is possible, and sometimes "untamable" and uncontrollable situations will spill forth from the romance (Frye, *Anatomy* 305). Romance has unlimited power: "Language has not become entirely impotent" (Foucault 48).

Although today we see the quixotic reader as an idealist and visionary,[6] it is important to understand that when Lennox wrote her novel of the reading heroine, the quixotic figure was in flux. This figure evolved from the buffoon to the visionary.

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[5] Cervantes also played with the comparison of romances to mirrors. In his attempt to cure Don Quixote, the Bachelor dresses up as the Knight of the Mirrors to fight and vanquish Quixote. Fortunately for romance, Don Quixote prevails, and the fallen Knight of the Mirrors reflects the heroism of Don Quixote (*Don Quixote*, Part 2, ch. 14).

[6] Compare, for instance, the idealism of his Quixote in Graham Greene's *Monsignor Quixote* (1982) or even the idealism of a science-fiction Quixote figure, Captain Jean-Luc Picard in the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, who lives out his love of detective stories on the "holodeck" as well as in outer space.

The Female Quixote, with its clear connection to Cervantes' novel, could be read either as a satire on an idiotic madwoman or as a romance of an idealist. While Don Quixote's death at the end lacks the optimism of success typical of the quest romance, the marriage of the hero and heroine at the end of *The Female Quixote* reflects the changing opinion towards the Quixote figure. While Arabella and Isabel (in the second parody novel) are mocked, these heroines also display powers of perception that we do not quite appreciate until they are seen to be rewarded at the end.

The Female Quixote and *The Doctor's Wife*, with their reading heroines who are rewarded, are already part of an established tradition of Quixote characters. In Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1663-1678), a satire in octosyllabic couplets, the eponymous Quixote figure is a hypocritical, pedantic Presbyterian whose avarice and cowardice are his final undoing. In the eighteenth century, however, the Quixote figure tends to be of a very different type.[7]

Eighteenth-century England began to experience the beginnings of a shift in the perception of Don Quixote. While the English still viewed Cervantes' novel as a satire, the move from literary satire--where he is seen as a mad reader of chivalric romances--to social satire--where Don Quixote represents the ideal from which the rest of Spain has lapsed--had its origins in the century's refinement of Quixote criticism

---

[7] In most Quixote fictions of the eighteenth century, the reader-protagonist is honest, intelligent, and generous as in Fielding's *Don Quixote in England* (1734) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *Angelica; or Quixote in Petticoats* (1758), Smollett's *The History of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760-61), Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760-67), Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (1771), Richard Graves's *The Spiritual Quixote: or the Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffrey Wildgoose* (1773), and *The Amicable Quixote* (1788).

(Close 11-13). Anthony Close suggests that eighteenth-century commentators, while recognising Cervantes' parody of chivalric romances, also recognise, especially in Part Two of *Don Quixote*, his satire on meddlesome ecclesiastics and excessive pedantry. That is, the social sphere--institutions and reprehensible mores--also come under Cervantes' satiric eye (Close 11-12). During the century, Don Quixote becomes more a hero and less a mad fool. Close points out that while views of Don Quixote as idealistic hero were probably in the minority, albeit a weighty minority, by the nineteenth century, "English Quixote criticism began to register in an insistent way the Romantic cult of imagination, genius, passion, and sensibility as faculties opposed or superior to reason" (43).

This shift in Quixote criticism appears in the various contemporary publications. Steele claims that Cervantes in his masterpiece single-handedly won against the nobility of Spain: they, rather than the romances Don Quixote reads, were often considered the butt of his lampoon (*Tatler* #31, 1709). That Cervantes was ridiculing his society more sharply than his Don became the prevalent view, encouraged by the appearance of various translations of the novel. In the prefatory verses to his 1711 translation of *Don Quixote*, Edward Ward wrote that "Cervantes brought true Wisdom to the height / And taught the distance betwixt Vain and Great" (qtd. Burton 5).

Henry Fielding, who continually returned to the Quixote motif, commented on "Cervantes' serious air" (*Criticism* 85). Fielding clearly viewed Cervantes' ***magnum opus*** as a social satire and not merely, if at all, as a literary satire against chivalric

romances. He praises Cervantes for intending not only diversion but also "Instruction and Reformation of his Countrymen" (*Covent-Garden Journal* 279). Fielding attempts the same instruction and reformation of his own English countrymen in his play, *Don Quixote in England* (1734). His Don, by the end of the play, proves that everyone else is more mad than himself (63).

Fielding thus appreciates Lennox's characterizations in *The Female Quixote*, which he favourably reviewed in the March 24, 1752 issue of his *Covent-Garden Journal*. The only advantage he accords Cervantes' novel over Lennox's is that the Spaniard had the original idea and made his incidents more ridiculous. Curiously, his comments do not recognise in Lennox the social criticism that he finds in Cervantes. He finds Lennox, however, more believable because one would expect a young woman rather than an old man to be "turned" by romances. Most young women, Fielding remarks, with the same innocence, vivacity, and good disposition, and the same situation and education, would fall into the same follies (281). In describing both Don Quixote and Arabella as "Persons of great Innocence, Integrity and Honour, and of the highest Benevolence" (280), Fielding describes an ideal in temperament. Arabella, the model rather than the warning, becomes an attractive catch to the various men in the novel who know that, once she is "cured" of this one "foible"--to use the term frequently employed by the Glanvilles--she will be the ideal wife.

Fielding, however, still reads *The Female Quixote* as a satire against the romance. This becomes harder to do since by mid-eighteenth century the particular French romances referred to by Lennox were no longer much read in profusion.

Fielding wants to show that Lennox's book instructs women to see their defects (which he does not articulate at all):

> [T]he Humour of Romance, which is principally ridiculed in this Work, be not at present greatly in fashion in this Kingdom, [sic] our Author hath taken such Care throughout her Work, to expose all those Vices and Follies in her Sex which are chiefly predominant in our Days, that it will afford very useful Lessons to all those young Ladies who will peruse it with proper Attention. (282)

While Fielding praises the purpose of the novel, Clara Reeve questions whether this purpose (to ridicule the novel) was even relevant at that time. Reeve in her astute discourse in praise of the romance, published in 1785, mentions that "the satire of *The Female Quixote* seems in great measure to have lost its aim, because at the time it first appeared, the taste for those Romances was extinct, and the books exploded." Romances, she says, "were quite out of fashion" (II: 6, 7). However, she says that the old romances served well for inculcating a moral education because the heroes "were patterns of courage, truth, generosity, humanity, and the most exalted virtues . . . [the] heroines were distinguished for modesty, delicacy, and the utmost dignity of manners" (Reeve 86-87). Romances paint men and women as they ought to be.

The fact that Reeve felt obliged to defend the romance by emphasizing its social function, rather than its solitary attention, highlights the paradox produced by the activity of reading. Reading either isolates the heroine from society or integrates her into it. The heroine who reads is different from and unique in her society. She

often stands out, like Arabella; or, because of her difference, she is identified as the heroine, like Maggie and Jane. However, the heroine who reads learns how to distinguish the different characters she meets during her history. At the end of the novel, she has learned to integrate successfully into society by marrying the man who is equal to her. In *Jane Eyre*, this paradox is more clearly demonstrated. Jane often reads in isolation behind curtains or in window-seats; but her interest in reading is what first attracts her to form a friendship with the quiet Helen Burns, a reader also.

The negative, alienating aspects of reading were a favourite topic of conduct book writers of the late eighteenth century, such as Gisborne, Fordyce, and Gregory. These writers echo a fear, articulated early in the century, that the young girl, isolated with her novels, will come to harm.[8] Thus, reading becomes a masturbatory practice.[9] It alienates her from her friends, infuses in her delicate mind knowledge better left unlearned, gives her pleasure, takes her away from her customary house-keeping duties, and eventually makes her unsuitable as wife and mother.

As the reading public grew in the eighteenth century, the need to denounce and

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[8] Clara Reeve laments that men of learning, especially collegians, speak disdainfully of both romances and novels (112). Novels in the eighteenth century, like violent videos today, aroused extreme opinions. Robert Day explains that to "speak of novels during the early eighteenth century was either to condemn them out of hand as paltry and wicked or to puff them shamelessly under the guise of criticism" (70).

[9] The language used to describe the activity of female reading is, according to Ferris, "highly sexual." She goes on to say that "[r]eading a story, the orgasmic language suggests, provides the sexual satisfaction that real life (and men) do not" (Ferris 40, 41).

condemn the novel attests to the novel's growing popularity. One early example[10] of this anti-novel rhetoric appears in Sarah Fielding's novel, *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744). David tells the story of a woman who is abused by her husband. When prompted for her history, she blames her undoing on reading novels: "I had nothing to do but to fly to Books for Refuge: All the Pleasure I had, was in reading Romances . . . for I began now to look on myself as the Heroine of a Romance" (53-54). This poor woman, educated by novels, chooses the wrong man for her husband. In contrast, another woman, Cynthia, is forbidden to read, since "reading and poring on Books, would never get me a Husband" (101). Another example which I believe can be read as ironic is in Jane Barker's *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1723). Even the title emphasizes the disparity between the socially correct pastime for women, needlework, and what they are actually doing with Barker's book, reading. After telling the story of Belinda, a woman ruined by a married man who abandons her when she becomes pregnant, the protagonist, Galesia, remarks that "this makes me reflect, how useless, or rather pernicious, Books and Learning are to our Sex. They are like Oatmeal or Charcoal to the deprav'd Appetites of Girls" (79). But there is no evidence that Belinda reads at all. Thus, blaming novels for any misfortune that befalls a woman has become a matter of routine.

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[10] Although Richard Steele's influential play, *The Tender Husband* (1705), has a "perfect Quixote in petticoats" (38), it does not denounce the romance with the same rhetoric as later texts do, such as Polly Honeycombe (1760) by George Colman, Sr. The non-readers in Steele's comedy are just as ridiculed as the romance reader. Aunt Barsheba Tipkin believes that lawyer Pounce is making love to her, and the almost illiterate Humphry Gubbin, intended for the Quixote Biddy Tipkins, marries Lucy Fainlove, a ruined woman.

By the nineteenth century, this sexual textual debate was still strong. Hester Chapone, although certainly not overly conservative in her view of young women, still suggests, in 1801, that woman's "nature" is incompatible with the labour involved in man's more learned education (Chapone 156). She ends her exhortation against "fictitious stories" which "tend to inflame the passions" with the claim that "indiscriminate reading of such kind of books corrupts more female hearts than any other cause whatsoever" (Chapone 168, 169). Like many other writers of his time, Dr J. H. Kellogg in his *Plain Facts about Sexual Life* (1885) argues that

> The works of our standard authors in literature abound in lubricity. Popular novels have doubtless done more to arouse a prurient curiosity in the young, and to excite and foster passion and immorality. . . . The more exquisitely painted the scenes of vice, the more dangerously enticing. Novel-reading has led thousands to lives of dissoluteness (qtd. Jalland 223).

Kellogg repeats the fear, earlier expressed about romances, that the excesses and transgressions depicted in popular fiction will eventually spill out into the real world. For Kellogg and others, the conflicts, struggles, violence of fiction cannot be controlled and contained to the page.

In contrast to the position that novels alienate readers, many authors themselves supported reading, arguing that it helps young girls to integrate successfully and with as little harm as possible into society. The famous passage from Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* attests to the fervour of at least one novelist who felt for her maligned profession:

> "Oh! it is only a novel!" replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame.--"It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;" or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language. (Austen 38)

The heroine after consuming novels conveying "the most thorough knowledge of human nature" can gain a better understanding of her world. Taking Austen's argument a step farther, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, as editor of a fifty-volume series of British novelists, wrote that "it is safer to meet with a bad character in the pages of a fictitious story, than in the polluted walks of life" (qtd. Ellis 15).

The romance, the most belittled of genres, has amassed a readership despite imputations of corrupting young women. Both Arabella and Isabel read mostly romances to fill in their lonely days. Their isolation is a result not of their reading but of their fathers' dictates. Romances not only bring excitement to their boring lives, but also provide women with a meeting place or space in which to communicate. Arabella speaks the language of the romance to the Countess, whose conversation reveals that she too knows the romances. Isabel also finds a compatible woman in Gwendoline, who recognises in the heroine a refinement of sensibilities. Jane, at Marsh End, spends her evenings reading the same books as her beloved "sisters," Diana and Mary. This genre associated with female readers becomes an inheritance passed down from one generation of readers to the next, just as Arabella has inherited

Scudéry romances from her mother. Using the romance, women communicate with other women over time and space.

While allowing both literary and real women to bond, these literary female spaces over time become a threat to both fictional and real men. In all four novels I examine, fictional men, reflecting the prevailing trend outside the novel, try to control in some way the reading of the heroines. Men prefer not to compete against the heroes described in romances. Often a man will succeed in limiting what she reads, but he more often assumes erroneously that he can control her interpretation of the text. While he may limit her reading, he cannot prevent her from becoming a writerly reader, re-creating new realities. To remove this menace, it becomes necessary to belittle and devalue romances written by women for women. While *Clarissa* and *Pamela* are never out of print, many woman-authored romances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have only recently been "discovered." These female-centered fictions were ridiculed for the outlandish adventures and the unrealistic plots allowed heroines. Margaret Anne Doody suggests reading female-centered prose fiction "can make women . . . think themselves too important" (Doody 79). She argues that the "[n]ovel can be allowed to continue to exist--even the novel about a woman by a woman--but only if the terms are agreed to" (Doody 79). Those are the taming of the woman into a wife--"the story of a girl learning her place" (Doody 79). The incredible romance is, therefore, tamed into the realistic novel.[11]

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[11] Northrop Frye suggests that, because the romance is older than the novel, an historical illusion developed around the romance as a "juvenile and undeveloped form" that the novel has outgrown (*Anatomy* 306). While this may explain in part the

Both Charlotte Brontë and Marian Evans tried to avoid being judged as women writers, whose fiction is valued differently from that by men. Choosing male or androgynous pseudonyms, Currer Bell and George Eliot signalled their acceptance of the role-playing required by women if they wished to participate in the "mainstream of literary culture" (Showalter, *Literature of Their Own* 19). As the nineteenth century progressed, it became more incumbent on novelists to depict "real" life. In step with the advent of a photographic process called Daguerreotype in 1839 and the rise of narrative painting, the realist novel constituted the mainstream towards which professional writers aimed.[12] The standards used to judge writers were based on how realistically they could depict their characters and plots. Reviewers would decide whether a writer, if publishing under a pseudonym, was male or female by how accurately he or she portrayed men. Women writers were often criticized for inaccurate depictions of heroes (Showalter, *Literature of Their Own* 133-34). On the other hand, if a woman novelist did draw men as they were, she would be censured

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attitude towards the romance, it does not explain why some male romance writers, such as Scott, made it into the canon and why so many female writers of romance did not (refer to Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority*, for a discussion of the tropes of male writer and female reader).

[12] Nathaniel Hawthorne, in a deliberate attack on this trend towards realism, shamelessly wrote in his 1851 Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* that

> When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former . . . has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation (Hawthorne vii).

for knowing too much about the world (Showalter, *Literature of Their Own* 135).

Charlotte Brontë, aware of this double standard, did not expect to receive much acclaim for *Jane Eyre*, since she modestly admitted she did not possess a "knowledge of the world" (Gérin 343). When *The North British Review*, using this literary double standard, praised *Jane Eyre* if it was written by a man, but called it "odious" if written by a woman, Brontë, in the assertive style of her heroine Jane Eyre, was prompted to write, "To you I am neither man nor woman--I come before you as an author only. It is the sole standard by which you have a right to judge me--the sole ground on which I accept your judgement" (qtd. Gordon 163).

George Eliot, a reviewer herself of hundreds of novels, and more familiar, first-hand as a "fallen" woman, with the world's double standard than Brontë, knew what the rules were for women authors and, therefore, was meticulous about her research into the characters, places, and events she described. She pored over Annual Registers to read about "inundation" (Haight, *George Eliot* 302) and consulted a lawyer to ensure her use of the "law" in *The Mill on the Floss* was correct (Haight, *George Eliot* 320). *The Mill on the Floss*, as a result, was successful with both Mudie's circulating library and the reviewers of literary journals (Haight, *George Eliot* 327).

Clearly, both Brontë and Eliot wanted to be judged as writers rather than as women scribbling; they wanted to be known for serious fiction rather than for "romances." But both *Jane Eyre* and *The Mill on the Floss* are quest romances, like *Don Quixote* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, with the attendant perilous journey, crucial struggle, and exaltation or recognition of the hero(ine) (Frye, *Anatomy* 187).

Moreover, the struggle and the violence exhibited in quest romances are, here, seen from a woman's point of view. It is the woman's struggle to find her identity which continually erupts into violence. Even the fantastic wood-engravings from Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds* and Daniel Defoe's *The Political History of the Devil* illustrate the violence underscoring both Jane's and Maggie's psychological interpretation of the fiction they read.

While the two parody novels rely on Cervantes's *Don Quixote* as an originating intertext, both the *Bildungsromane* refer back to Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* as an organizing motif. Christian, a literary descendent of Don Quixote, embarks on his Christian knight errantry, like the Don before him, after reading a book. Both *Bildungsromane* contain symbolic elements, such as Rochester's blindness (taming the Byronic hero) and the apocalyptic flood. *Jane Eyre*, moreover, borrows the violence from both the gothic romance and the fairy tale. Like *Jane Eyre*, *The Mill on the Floss* is another *Pilgrim's Progress*, employing stylized characters. Furthermore, the numerous allusions to other fictional texts encourage us to make connections between this "realistic" romance and the non-realistic frame of reference.

Finally, it is not only what these heroines read but the fact that they *do* read which is in some way a challenge to their society's conceptions of woman. In the parody novels, Arabella and Isabel represent difference from the other traditional women in the novels. Both romances clearly defend women's reading practices by showing their rewards and by ridiculing the society that produces the Charlotte Glanvilles and the Misses Burdock and Pawlkatt. While Arabella's reward, in the

eighteenth century, is marriage, the nineteenth-century heroines' reward becomes much more complicated, especially since their reading becomes wrapped up in the issues surrounding the "woman question."

In *The Doctor's Wife*, Isabel's quest, unlike Arabella's, is not to find the right man to marry, since she marries soon after the first few chapters. Her quest is to find a role model, in the books she reads, on which she can construct herself. Braddon had earlier questioned the role of women in Victorian society by creating her *femme fatale*, Lady Audley.[13] Although *The Doctor's Wife* is less popular,[14] Braddon still seems to question male constructions.[15] Unlike Lady Audley, who is created to reflect male fantasies of the feminine ideal, Isabel creates her own fantasies of the masculine ideal. Her fictional creations, unlike the doctor's or the landowner's, become the reality of the novel; her own life begins to resemble one of her romances. Unlike the earlier Arabella "tamed" by the Doctor, Isabel survives the controlling influence of two men,

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[13] See Elaine Showalter, Winifred Hughes, and Sarah Putzell.

[14] One reason for its unpopularity may be the fact that *The Doctor's Wife* was last printed over a century ago. *The National Union Catalogue* lists the Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent edition as the last in 1892. Christopher Heywood, whose articles present the similarities between *The Doctor's Wife* and other novels, such as *Middlemarch*, *The Return of the Native*, and *The Mummer's Wife*, uses the undated, stereotyped edition, estimating the year to be 1900. The undated edition I am using might be dated as late as 1904 because the advertisement in the front lists other novels by Braddon, with the last named, *A Lost Eden*, published in 1904. This page, however, might have been tipped into an earlier edition. The title page lists *London Pride*, published in 1896, perhaps a more accurate date for this edition.

[15] Refer to Timothy Reiss, in *The Meaning of Literature*, for his discussion of the relationship of art and gender. He argues that men constructed women as "appreciated objects" fit only for "manual work ... because they could not concentrate on serious matters." But when women were elevated to guardians of domestic harmony, they came closer to being identified with the nation's culture (Reiss 202).

and it is their deaths and not her own which give her freedom. Here, Braddon suggests that marriage is not necessarily the reward for the heroine.

In the two *Bildungsromane*, Jane Eyre and, initially, Maggie Tulliver, anticipating Isabel Sleaford's "freedom," rewrite the traditional "novelistic" plot that eventually overtakes Arabella. Jane, as autobiographer, anticipates and frustrates our expectations of the wedding scene with Rochester. But Jane would be lost if she succumbed to what Lyndall Gordon calls "any of the plots on offer" (146). By rewriting the expected roles for women, distressed princesses and imprisoned Pamelas, *Jane Eyre*, the name of both the woman and the book, does become "dangerous" (Gordon 162), inciting women to express female desire and agency through the "I." Jane leaves Rochester not so much because of the legal implications of his already having a wife as because he lied in order to force a particular role on her (Gordon 147).

Maggie Tulliver, in the second *Bildungsroman*, also looks for meaning in woman's roles in the books she reads. But, unlike Jane Eyre--a writerly reader--, she cannot reconcile what she reads to a new vision. She has not learned to find creative answers in the books she reads. So she looks into the text's omissions and gaps where she can re-envision herself. But like Arabella, Isabel, and Jane, Maggie constitutes the writing, and her search for meaning in the gaps and blanks suggests the inadequacy of the books she is given or her inability to rewrite the stories she reads. She will

eventually become lost in the flood, the void: an ending to her own life and the text's.[16] Her own ending, the point of departure for my chapter on *The Mill on the Floss*, returns us to the *Don Quixote* intertext. Maggie's death, like Don Quixote's, concluding her struggle against St Ogg's, signals a harsh criticism of her society. By the nineteenth century, social criticism, begun covertly in eighteenth-century novels, has become overt and insistent.

Maggie's death does not signal the failure of romances to reflect an idealized world. The failure is in her refusal to finish reading the two romances Philip Wakem offers her. On the other hand, the romances Arabella, Isabel, and Jane read confirm their growing sense of who they are and who they will be. They are reading heroines of their own romance, who will either write or have someone write their "histories." In turn, other "heroines" in the making will read these adventures and wish their own dull lives mirrored the ideals, the excitement and stimulation, reflected in the pages of the romance. And one hopes that they, unlike Maggie, will continue to read romances in which the heroine's wish fulfilment ends the romance. Women readers have already raised a question: if heroines can attain the ideal, why can their dreams not be mirrored in reality. And because the romance offers women a pattern to guide behaviour and to fulfill a lack in real life, it will continue to be denigrated and maligned.

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[16] Interestingly, it is Tom's recognition of his sister's moral integrity minutes before they are overcome by the floating machinery that recalls the myth of Narcissus, whose own recognition of himself precipitates his death in the pond that held his image (see Ovid, Vol. 1, Book III).

Chapter Two

The Power of Romance: *The Female Quixote*

> The world's male chivalry has perished out,
> But women are knights-errant to the last;
> And if Cervantes had been Shakespeare too,
> He had made his Don a Donna.
>
> E.B. Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (1856), 7:224-27.

Reading for women has always been a precarious amusement. Even after two centuries of novel-reading, today's reading woman is often described in pejorative terms. Reading fiction is not generally considered educational or a worthwhile occupation. In the eighteenth century, this anti-novel bias was even more pronounced. Arguments against reading included accusations that the novel led women to adultery and prostitution, and would eventually corrupt the entire nation (Kelly 186, 190). However, some readers/writers, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Samuel Johnson, and Clara Reeve, argued that reading novels was a beneficial education for women.[1] Among these readers/writers, I argue that Charlotte Lennox has a place.

Many critics read Charlotte Lennox's second novel, *The Female Quixote*, published in 1752, as a parody against romances. The parody interpretation of the heroine, Arabella, represents her as a silly, deluded woman who observes her world through the French romances she devours. Other critics, however, are beginning to see another side to Lennox's novel. The beautiful, intelligent, young heiress-heroine,

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[1] See *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, particularly Volume III, (see letters dated January 28, 1753 and October 10, 1753); Samuel Johnson, *Rambler* #96 (Saturday, February 16, 1751); and Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance Through Times, Countries, and Manners (1785)*.

Arabella, peruses romances, imagining herself correctly as the heroine, like the illustrious ladies she reads about, of her own story. Arabella's reading, I will argue, provides her with the space and liberty that life does not; in the end she freely chooses the right man to marry.

The French romances Arabella reads, Ronald Paulson claims, stand "between Arabella and her feelings and of course thwart Glanville's feelings" (276). Paulson ignores Arabella as a valid, autonomous subject, arguing that she is "a monster of egotism or self-sufficiency" (277). The novel falls apart, he continues, when Arabella is introduced into society. But compared to the other, sordid-thinking ladies, Arabella becomes an ideal and not the satirized caricature he interprets. Similarly, Alexander Welsh, in *Reflections on the Hero as Quixote*, comments that Arabella "is duly transformed by the courtship plot, and if the reader is willing to stick with it, he must accept Arabella for sane and sensible as well as beautiful in the end" (151). Welsh's diction indicates his surprise and incredulity that this beautiful heroine can ever become sane and sensible. Both men, identifying with the male characters in the novel, see *The Female Quixote* as a book of manners, instructing men on how to approach Arabella (Paulson 278-279). Other interpretations are less critical of Arabella, although they continue to discuss the novel primarily as a parody of romances. For instance, Clive Probyn attempts to justify Arabella's odd behaviour by explaining that other fictional "readers," such as Parson Adams through his classical learning in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and Walter Shandy through his philosophical obsessions in *Tristram Shandy* (1760), also misread their worlds.

Perhaps Patricia Meyer Spacks best sums up this interpretive problem. She points out that those who read Arabella as a foolish girl reading unwisely extract only those points from the text which support their argument. Those who read Arabella as a heroine constructing herself and her world from the paradigms she reads in French romances will, naturally, use different textual arguments. Both interpretations, Spacks asserts, are valid readings; however, her arguments tend to emphasize the need these marginalized women have for meaning, activity, and control in their society ("Subtle Sophistry" 533). Arabella is determined to create power and significance for herself through her reading. And by testing those she meets with her romantic criteria, she avoids being manipulated by unsavoury men. In contrast, Ernest Baker, in *History of the English Novel*, suggests that Arabella is "thrown into ecstasies of alarm at things and people more harmless than Don Quixote's windmills" (40). Obviously, Baker has little understanding of the real threats Arabella, as an heiress, faces. Arabella, however, does realize the magnitude of her marital decision; and, therefore, she must choose that man who wishes to marry her for herself and not for her money. The real lover is non-interfering and loyal (Spacks, "Subtle Sophistry" 535).

Other modern critics, such as Deborah Ross, aware of the complexity of this novel, question, like Spacks, whether Arabella is a model or a warning. If she is a warning against excessive reading, then how does one explain away the follies and vices of the non-reading Charlotte Glanville, Arabella's foil, or explain why no other superior alternative is offered? If she is to any degree a model, then is it convincing, as Ross suggests, also to say that the text "unequivocally" condemns the romance

(456)? Susan Auty circumvents this dilemma by comparing the other characters' view of the world to Arabella's. Next to Arabella, the non-romantics, such as Sir Charles and Charlotte Glanville, appear just as ridiculous as Arabella (Auty 68-69). Moreover, Auty asserts that Arabella's "blindness" sharpens the reader's vision. The reader, for instance, supports Arabella's determination to remove the prostitute from the "Power of that Man" (*FQ* 336). Thus, Auty argues that Lennox meant no "poisoned darts" against Arabella. There is no "ironic betrayal." Instead, she suggests that the real villains are the invisible writers of romance and not the romances themselves (75).

Blaming the long-dead authors of romances eludes the question about the effect of these persistent romances on Arabella's conduct. Laurie Langbauer, however, picks up where Auty ends. In her article, "Romance Revised: Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote*" and in her longer study, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel*, Langbauer privileges the marginalized romance, which, like marginalized women rebelling against the male order, represents sedition against and subversion of the dominant canon. Langbauer argues that the romance, after having given birth to the novel, is often denigrated and derided when compared to the son and heir, the novel. She tackles Ian Watt, in his *The History of the Novel*, for his attempts to differentiate between the two genres, which he later collapses into one when introducing "novels" as different "romances" (*Women and Romance* 24).

In discussing *The Female Quixote*, Langbauer, using Freudian language, argues that the novel continually strives to distance itself from the romance. As the son, the maturing novel defines itself in terms of difference from the mother, the romance.

Similarly, *The Female Quixote* needs to define itself as that which is not excessive, fictional, and outrageous by structuring its plot on the "contrast between the novel and romance" ("Romance Revised" 29). By emphasizing the emptiness of romance, the novel affirms its own meaning and value at the expense of the romance. In the romantic world that Arabella reads about, women have meaning and value; but in the novelistic world, women have no meaningful voice. At the end, Arabella's voice blends in with the doctor's, just as Lennox's own voice disappears into Dr Johnson's--or at least enough to cause confusion as to who wrote the penultimate chapter. As the romance becomes more novelistic, Arabella's voice fades (Langbauer, "Romance Revised" 43). Significantly, the countess, a mother figure, exemplifies this voicelessness by being introduced and then discarded.[2] Spacks agrees with Langbauer, citing the point that "romances tell the truth of female desire" ("Subtle Sophistry" 533). Because the romance voices female desire, Spacks extrapolates that "the life of every woman is a Romance" (*Imagining a Self* 191). Although Deborah Ross, in "Mirror, Mirror: The Didactic Dilemma of *The Female Quixote*," agrees that the "glorification of love" elevates women (457), she, as well as Spacks, sees *The Female Quixote*, like Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, as both a romance and a satire of romance (458). In Cervantes' novel, when the spell of romance is broken, the hero dies. But in Lennox's novel, Ross finds a difference, when, instead of dying once the romantic

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[2] Arabella, whose own mother is dead, is cured by a man, whose position (or place) is assured because the countess's own mother, whose "indisposition," a derivation of "placelessness," requires her attendance (*FQ* 330; "Romance Revised" 48).

spell is broken, Arabella marries and lives, supposedly, happily ever after. Langbauer, however, explains that this ending is indeed the end for Arabella. Once Arabella gives up her romances, at the urgency of the anti-romantic doctor,[3] and settles for life in a novel, her story ends, and the novel, separating itself from the romance it parodies, also ends.

While not committing themselves to one ideological argument rather than another, both Sally Hoople and Miriam Small locate Arabella and her obsessive reading in a reading tradition. Starting with Cervantes's original reader, Hoople compares his *Don Quixote* with Lennox's Arabella and Tabitha Tenney's Dorcasina Sheldon in *Female Quixotism* (Boston 1801), finding them to share certain qualities. Despite the fact that they all have servants rooted in reality as foils, Quixote, Arabella, and Dorcasina are still separated from reality, living in an "unreal world of imagination." However, they are not completely devoid of sanity and exhibit a high degree of humanitarianism and lucidity (Hoople 120). Although Arabella deviates from those women who frequent the balls in Bath or the parks in London because of her reading, page after page describes a beautiful, articulate, intelligent woman. Like her predecessor, Arabella is not only noted for her intelligence, but also for her respect of and civility to others (Hoople 123-24, 125). Both "Quixote" and "Dorcasina" are assumed names intended to signify in their imaginations their chivalrous or romantic

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[3] Langbauer argues that the male doctor is a more appropriate antidote to romance than the countess. It is fitting that a male, associated for Langbauer with the more realistic novel, should be the one to dissuade Arabella from the feminized romances in which she felt important and powerful.

nature. Interestingly, Arabella keeps her own name since, perhaps, it already conveys her heroine status in the reality of the novel.

Miriam Small, in the first full-length book on Charlotte Lennox,[4] also compares Arabella to her precursor, Don Quixote. Both burlesques, for instance, employ the burning books episode and a speech about the law and heroes/knights errant. Cervantes' hero argues that knights errant are exempt from laws covering plebeians: knights errant do not pay taxes, tolls, duty, customs, etc. because they alone have the courage to defeat hundreds of men who dare confront them. Arabella's speech that the "Law has no Power over Heroes" is often cited as the equivalent (Small 73). The differences between these two speeches emphasize the vast differences between Quixote's chivalric, male-centred romances and Arabella's French, female-centred romances. Don Quixote stresses the favours others owe their knights. Tailors give them new suits, wardens offer hospitality, and, for the *pièce de résistance*, beautiful maidens offer themselves freely to the will and pleasure of these wandering ministers of chivalry (I.45.410). Not surprisingly, Arabella never mentions these favours,

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[4] Two other, significantly shorter books have been written about Lennox. Both give plot summaries of her novels and a brief biography based primarily on her novel *Harriot Stuart*. Both books, however, are chiefly concerned with placing Lennox in an early American tradition. Gustavus Howard Maynadier, in *The First American Novelist?* (1940), questions whether Lennox was even born in the United States because, he says, her heroine, Harriot Stuart, sails to and not away from New York harbour (66, 67). Philippe Sejourné, in his *The Mystery of Charlotte Lennox: First Novelist of Colonial America (1727?-1804)* (1967), also claims that *Harriot Stuart* is autobiographical. Describing Harriot/Lennox, Sejourné says that she is a "romantic young lady and, in some way, already a Female Quixote" (144). Despite the fact that Lennox herself was familiar with popular novels and romances, Sejourné says that she ridicules this type of reading in *The Female Quixote* (147).

especially the last one. Moreover, Arabella glories in the bloodier aspects of heroism: the more men heroes kill, the "greater their Reputation for Virtue and Glory" (*FQ* 128). This statement has less in common with Cervantes' romance than with French romances in which heroes often battle armies, much to the chagrin of the waiting maidens, who often press for peace and not bloodshed. But the emphasis on violence in romance undermines women's social restrictions and constructions as passive domestic creatures.

The differences between Arabella and Quixote have less to do with what they read than with their sex and the educational limitations imposed on women. Arabella, at an early age bereft of her mother, has no female role models. Like her mother before her, she has little to do, incarcerated in the country, except read the romances her mother has passed down to her. Arabella reads (as do Isabel, Jane, and Maggie) to gain knowledge of her world, and not to revive a dead chivalric tradition as does Quixote. Arabella reads about heroines, her role models, who have agency and power. As a consequence, Arabella acts and speaks in the manner of the heroines she has read about in French romances. She chooses to emulate strong, commanding women, such as the ruling Cleopatra, the wise Mandana, and the Amazonian Thalestris, who is offered the command of an army. From these women, Arabella, attracted to power, gains strength and learns to control events that would otherwise control her.

Thus, this novel is essentially about power. It begins with her father's, the Marquis's, power at court where he "disposed of all Places of Profit as he pleased, presided at the Council, and in a manner governed the whole Kingdom" (5). As in the

romances, this "king" loses all and retreats to his secluded castle where he governs over a smaller court, his wife and daughter. Although the Marquis's power is curtailed to his family, it there extends beyond the grave. He writes his commands in his will, and later his influence on his daughter surfaces when Arabella initially refuses to appear at the court where her father met his disgrace (333). By the end of the novel, Arabella, following in the footsteps of her father, loses her power when she gives herself to Charles Glanville, her father's choice (383).

Even before Arabella consents to marry, she is perfectly aware that a lover's aim is to take away her liberty either through marriage or by making her a prisoner, obviously interchangeable states (35). Marriage, she asserts, makes the man "Master of her Liberty" (34). Therefore, she wishes to "live single" (41) rather than have her "Adventures" as a heroine end (138). She even suggests that she would die rather than lose the "Power to bestow" her affection on whom she chooses (54). A heroine, according to Arabella's reading, must remain virginal if she wants to wield power (also see Spacks, *Imagining a Self* 90).

These virginal women can banish men for the slightest infractions to the strict language code (39, 45), or force them to live or die (136-37, 145, 247-48) for infidelity or disobedience (146). If the man is unfortunate enough not to die fast enough to please his mistress, he begs her pardon for every sigh he breathes (247). Man's only goal is to serve his mistress (54, 63, 111, 127) and be her slave (249), all because he loves her with a pure and faithful passion (89): "Love requires a more unlimited Obedience from its Slaves, than any other Monarch can expect from his

Subjects; an Obedience which is circumscrib'd by no Laws whatever, and dependent upon nothing but itself" (321). This strict regimen does not appeal to Glanville, who would rather see the heroes in "Possession of their Mistresses." Arabella assures him this is a possibility only "after numberless Misfortunes, infinite Services, and many dangerous Adventures, in which their Fidelity was put to the strongest Trials imaginable" (48).

From the beginning, female power is an issue that various men in the novel must contend with. Glanville regrets the "little Power his Father had over her" (65) while Arabella believes she has "absolute Power" over her lovers (146, 320). The episode with Hervey appears to be tacked on, according to Langbauer, in order to demonstrate the contest between men and women for power ("Romance Revised" 45). Mr Hervey, after observing Arabella and her entourage and assuming correctly she is an heiress, schemes to become better acquainted with the Marquis. He assumes that her father will be impressed with his show of wit and personal accomplishments and, therefore, will give Arabella and her vast inheritance to him for his prize (11). His attempts at communication with Arabella are thwarted until he approaches her riding on horseback. Arabella, aware of his amorous designs, names him her ravisher and succeeds in shaming him. She suggests to Hervey that "a little more Submission and Respect would become you better; you are now wholly in my Power." With that she disarms him, a symbolic castration, of his short sword that hung from his belt (20).

Like Hervey, Edward, the gardener assistant, has, we are told, "evil Designs in his Head" when he is caught stealing carp, an ignoble pursuit even for a thief.

Arabella, however, assumes he is a nobleman in disguise (23). The narrator (and reader) mocks Arabella's romantic view, which confuses the real gardener with a seeming nobleman. This raises the question of what is real and what is an illusion. Lionel Trilling comments on this when defining the purpose of literature: "All literature tends to be concerned with the question of reality . . . . the old opposition between reality and appearance, between what really is and what merely seems" (201). With this in mind, I believe the novel simultaneously mocks and supports Arabella's romantic view of the world. While ridiculing Arabella in her suspicions of disguises, this romantic novel supports Arabella's notions of masquerade with a number of disguised figures. A prostitute, disguised as a boy, is discovered in the gardens at Vauxhall by drunken men who attempt to use her for their entertainment (335). Another woman, an actress, disguises herself as the lovely unknown, Cynecia (343), in order to deceive Arabella. The nobleman, Sir George, disguises himself, appropriately to the romance, in a horseman's coat to make a surprise appearance before Arabella. Charlotte Glanville, in turn, disguises herself as Arabella to meet Sir George clandestinely (365).

Other minor men who wish to have Arabella under their control end up more unfortunate than she. For instance, the stranger with the chaise is "extremely glad at having so beautiful a Creature in his Power" (100). But his chaise is overturned, and he is left bewildered at the following scenes with Glanville and Edward, who is banished for ever by Arabella and the text. Eventually, Arabella has cause to accuse the stranger with the chaise as being "very unfit to be a Protector" of any woman

(107), certainly a masculine humiliation. Selvin, who "affected to be thought deep-read in History" (264), and Tinsel, who believed his letters never fail to attract women (291), are both humiliated and exposed by the attractive and well-read Arabella. Her speech on history brings "shame" to Selvin (265), who is told by Arabella that his "Reading has been very confined" (266). Poor Tinsel's *billet-doux* is a "Disappointment" (296) to Arabella and his very person at her apartment door repels rather than attracts her (300). By the time we read about these latter two men, we cheer when Arabella gains the upper hand and destroys their arrogance and confidence.

The incident of the three highwaymen, while intended to show a world that is dangerous and fraught with obstacles, also questions the interpretation of the reality of events. Like Hervey, the three highwaymen pose a threat to the young heiress (257), confirming Arabella's view of a dangerous world. She, however, reads this episode differently from the Glanvilles, who now fear for their safety. She believes the three horsemen want to deliver her and Charlotte from the male Glanvilles. Significantly, Arabella uses this experience to pose the question of whether we can trust what we see when we have no evidence to confirm the impression one way or another. She claims that there cannot be any certainty who is correct, Glanville or Arabella, since the three men rode away without either robbing them of money and jewels or robbing her escorts of Arabella (259). One can only speculate whether Lennox was questioning her own readers' interpretations of *The Female Quixote*.

Sir George Bellmour, however, can be read only one way. He is more in love with Arabella's fortune than with her person (129); he is unfaithful to the two women

with whom he flirts while he indicates to the one that he is ridiculing the other (196); and he deceives the three Glanvilles about his true intentions, which are to marry Arabella and enjoy her wealth (130, 139, 171). Sir George soon realizes that in order to gain Arabella he must speak to her in the language of romance. He expresses himself in the convoluted, sensitive and emotional style of the romance while exhibiting the proper etiquette and deportment of the languishing lover (129-130).

Arabella, fluent in this language of romance, praises a lover's fidelity and constancy, suggesting that unfaithfulness (even the unsubstantiated hint of infidelity) in the past will create dishonour and unhappiness in the future: "What Lady, think you, will receive your Services, loaded as you are with the terrible Imputation of Inconstancy?" (151). Arabella's speech to Sir George is a reminder of the previous story of the faithless Mr L., Miss Groves's lover, who deserted her. Her emphasis on the man's infidelity, rather than on the woman's dishonour, places the blame and responsibility on the man's shoulders, an obvious reversal from the expectations of Mrs Morris, the disappointed narrator of Miss Groves's "adventures" (77). Not surprisingly, Sir George, a seducer, is introduced (85) soon after Arabella's kind treatment of and sympathy towards the "tragic" Miss Groves, a seduced woman.

Like the previous examples of men failing to overpower Arabella, Sir George, although superficially conforming to the rules governing the language of the romance, fails to seduce Arabella and eventually commits a grammatical *faux pas*, thus exposing his duplicity. Versed in many languages, Sir George can speak to the male Glanvilles in the authoritarian, worldly language of the mundane as well as in Arabella's select,

distinct language of the romance as derived from the translations of the seventeenth-century French romances. Confident that he can speak to Arabella in the same romantic dialect, Sir George attempts to use that language to deceive Arabella as he has done the Glanvilles in the dialect they understand. Sir George seizes the opportunity, when they are left alone, to say "an hundred gallant Things to her." He expects Arabella to respond favourably, as would Charlotte Glanville, who speaks the language of the coquette. But Arabella's reading, and thus her use of the romantic code, have conditioned her to such praises, "the most extravagant compliments being what she expected from all Men." She receives Sir George's speech with "great Indifference" (118). Arabella's insouciance makes Sir George's language, which he expected would overpower her resistance, impotent.

Since his verbal attacks are rendered useless, Sir George next attempts a love letter to overpower her. We can only anticipate another failure since he had once "employed himself some Weeks in giving a new Version of the *Grand Cyrus*" but failed when the "prodigious Length of the Task he had undertaken" had "terrified him so much" (129). Sir George assumes that Arabella, for the sake of propriety, would keep his love letter a secret. But Arabella does not speak the language of the mundane, as exemplified by the speeches of Sir Charles Glanville and his son, or the language of the coquette, as exemplified by the talk of Miss Groves and Charlotte Glanville, who would tell a rival but never a father or brother. After Sir George hears Arabella's speech commanding him to live and shake off his despair, he realizes his error in judgement and is left speechless. The silenced aristocrat is then described in

typically feminine terms: "He blushed, and turned pale alternately; and, not daring to look, either upon Miss Glanville, or her Brother, or to meet the Eyes of the fair Visionary, who, with great Impatience, expected his Answer, he hung down his Head in a very silly Posture; and, by his Silence, confirmed Arabella in her Opinion" (194-95). Arabella's language silences and emasculates Sir George.

Sir George eventually augments his imitation of the romantic hero and, in his last two attempts to gain Arabella, becomes an author himself when he creates his "histories."[5] In both cases, he fails because he underestimates the power of the romance he imitates: the 'master' of languages becomes a poor translator. In the first, Sir George hopes that his personal history, in which he places himself as a prince and languishing lover, will have the desired effect on Arabella. In relating his history, he plays the author well since his story must appear to the Glanvilles (whom he intends to entertain without offending)[6] as a mockery of Arabella's reading and to Arabella as a true history of his adventures in the romantic tradition (209 ff.). He succeeds in diverting and distracting the simple Sir Charles completely (211, 253) and initially his son (212). But after hearing about his abject devotion to three women in succession, Arabella, using the romance as her guide, reads Sir George correctly:

For, in fine, Sir, pursued she, you will never persuade any reasonable Person,

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[5] Also see Sir Charles's suggestion that Sir George has the talent to be an author in grub-street (252). If Sir George is the author, then Arabella, the reader and critic, exposes his falsity.

[6] Glanville had earlier requested Sir George to behave with more respect towards his cousin, believing the aristocrat's language denoted mockery and not seduction.

> that your being able to lose the Remembrance of the fair and generous Sydimiris, in your new Passion for Philonice, was not an Excess of Levity: but your suffering so tamely the Loss of this last Beauty, and allowing her to remain in the Hands of her Ravisher, while you permit another Affection to take Possession of your Soul, is such an Outrage to all Truth and Constancy, that *you deserve to be ranked among the falsest of Mankind*. (250, italics mine)

Thus, Arabella's reading of fiction allows her to discover Sir George's falsity, which proves to be his undoing.

Sir George's second fictional creation, involving the actress playing the deserted Cynecia, is his final attempt to dissuade Arabella from marrying Glanville. Like his previous assaults, this one renders him powerless, both psychologically and finally physically. Arabella, after hearing the fictional account of Glanville's infidelity, realizes that she does love her cousin. Instead of separating the betrothed cousins for ever, Sir George's fiction forces Arabella to acknowledge her attachment: "Our charming Heroine, ignorant till now of the true State of her Heart, was surpriz'd to find it assaulted at once by all the Passions which attend disappointed Love" (349). This episode not only awakens Arabella to new emotions but also forces Glanville into the unexpected role of "hero" when he uses his sword against his disguised rival. This episode also underscores the importance of romances in allowing heroines the confidence which eighteenth-century ideology would suppress to feel and recognise love. This helps to account for the querulous attacks against the genre.

Glanville eventually wins the prize, Arabella, not through deceiving or exerting

power over her but through seeing the world as she does. One could almost read *The Female Quixote* as an account not only of Arabella's "cure" but also of Glanville's reformation. Initially, Glanville reacts to her "foible" as if she jested, while ignoring her cues and language. He enters her rooms without receiving permission (34), orders her servants as if they were his own (31), and has his father's encouragement to reform her (64). Arabella, in contrast, avoids his conversation and is "persuaded that Passion would cause no Reformation in . . . his Manners to Ladies" (30).

The difficulty Glanville has is in communicating with Arabella in the language of romance: they speak different tongues. Their brief letters exemplify these differences. Glanville hints that Arabella will not make him happy. Clearly, he places the responsibility on Arabella and not on himself: she must please him. In contrast, Arabella's even shorter missive expresses her lack of power. She orders him back "not by the Power I have over you," she says, but "in Obedience to my Father's absolute Commands" (40). Arabella's dislike of Glanville is further exacerbated when she reads his letter "in a Style so different from what she expected" (39). Likewise, Glanville finds her style "very uncommon" (40). But yet it is her uncommonness, her difference from other women, which attracts Glanville.

Glanville is eventually reformed; but only after he is "captivated" by her discourse on romances. His admiration for her arises from her "Wit and Delicacy" which he finds support her singular view of the world (45). Although Glanville does not read the romances he believes are written "upon the most trifling Subjects imaginable" (49), he does learn the language of romance and the role of the hero.

Like the hero Artamenes in *The Grand Cyrus*, Glanville, also cousin to the heroine, provides a service to her father (60-61). But he also protects Arabella against both fathers: he saves her books from being burned (56) and saves her from being declared a lunatic by his father, Sir Charles (339). He also expresses the desire to follow in "exact Obedience to her Commands" (63). He does this by becoming her champion. He initially avoids serious confrontation by verbally defending the honour of Cleopatra (106); but later his deeds become less comical and more earnest. He fights Mr Hervey (157), is willing to brave the three highwaymen while his own father cowers (257), and finally he runs a sword through Sir George, his real rival (357). During this time, he also verbally defends Arabella against the derogatory attacks of Sir George (197) and Tinsel (303). His devotion to Arabella also becomes more serious. At first, he "minded nothing but his Cousin," keeping close by her side while riding (154). Later, when Sir Charles counsels his son to find another woman, Glanville, with the characteristic "Sigh," explains that "there is no Woman upon Earth whom I would choose to marry, but Lady Bella" (200). While his father says he could have any woman he wanted (200), Glanville remains the faithful hero. Finally, he is willing to risk imprisonment for the potential death of Sir George in order to remain in England with Arabella: "he would rather die than leave Arabella in that Illness" (366). After suffering the obligatory illness (133-34), he learns the emotional language necessary for the hero. Glanville, described in the exaggerated idiom of romance, is tormented with "a thousand different Fears" (179). Arabella causes him to feel "violent Emotion" (98), "inconceivable Shame" (312), and "great Anguish of Mind, in not knowing

whither to direct his Course" (98). He eventually becomes either a madman (120) or a criminal, both of which, in legal terms, are powerless.

The men in *The Female Quixote* are not only psychologically powerless but also physically powerless against this romance tradition. The marquis, representing the ailing patriarchy, is dead before much has happened in the novel (59). Langbauer asserts that "his main function in the novel is to be ailing" (*Women and Romance* 87). Mr Hervey suffers a headache (17), Glanville a serious fever (131), and Sir George from wounds (357). Arabella believes that she is responsible for these illnesses, since "few Lovers ever arrive to the Possession of their Mistresses, without being several times brought almost to their Graves" (132). Although the novel ridicules Arabella's belief in her powers, Langbauer argues that in a sense she really is responsible (87). Weak men (and women) emphasize, by their contrast, Arabella's strength and control. Only when Glanville is close to death does Arabella, following the romantic code of ethics, weaken her resolve against him by allowing him to love her. Likewise, Sir George, understanding this code of male weakness, feigns mortal illness in order to win her heart (175; also see the dying Bellmour before the Princess Philonice, 245). Likewise, it is only after Arabella is herself weakened by a fever that her change can be effected by the doctor.

Some commentators on the representation of woman might foster the expectation that the beautiful Arabella would lose any power she gains when subjected to the male gaze. As a heroine, Arabella, not surprisingly, charms a number of men and, later, women by her exceptional beauty (6, 8-9, 43, 60, 80, 84, 154). According

to Laura Mulvey, who has written extensively on the male gaze in film, the woman loses any autonomy when she becomes the spectacle:

> Woman, then, stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command, by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning. (Mulvey 15)

This is the manifestation of phallocentrism, which depends upon "the image of the castrated woman" (Mulvey 14). Arabella, in reversing this tendency to make her merely the bearer and not the maker of meaning, robs the gazers of the pleasure of the look and gains intense satisfaction herself because their gaze confirms her belief that she is the heroine of some romance. Arabella uses the male gaze to make meaning for her: she is the heroine and the centre of the novel. The men have no meaning except in context with Arabella, who provides them with their identity, that of admiring the incomparable heroine.

In the same article, Mulvey concedes that "there is pleasure in being looked at" (Mulvey 16), especially when the spectacle is aware of the gaze, thereby ensuring recognition of its own image. Jacques Lacan, in his lecture "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I," emphasizes the importance of the mirror stage to the constitution of the ego when he describes the child becoming aware of itself, initially through watching itself looking at itself in the mirror (2). The mirror is also used in *The Female Quixote* to describe Arabella's developing identity. Charlotte

Glanville, Arabella's "other," looks into the same "Mirror which every Day represented a Face infinitely more lovely than her own" (91). In the same way, Arabella must see herself being seen in order to be the heroine. We are told, early in the novel, that Arabella, as a seventeen-year-old, regrets "seeing herself the Object of Admiration to a few Rustics only, who happened to see her" (8). Instead, she wants to "see herself" the object of admiration from young noblemen.

As heroine, she defines the pleasure of the gaze. When she wants a nobleman to gaze upon her, Hervey, the first of her conquests, appears. His gaze makes her blush with "a very becoming Modesty" (8); but when he attempts to steal a look at Arabella with a "nearer View," he becomes the unwilling, embarrassed spectacle (19, 21). Arabella's pleasure, however, continues in the thought that she was correct in believing Hervey did want to ravish her, albeit only with his eyes. Like Hervey, Glanville also contributes to Arabella's belief that she is a heroine when he gazes upon her rapturously. Initially, Glanville enjoys her charms uninterruptedly; but when he gazes upon her with "Eagerness and Delight," his intense stare does not escape Arabella's "Observation" (36). The text shifts from Glanville's desire to Arabella's pleasure in being the object of such passionate looks. The object of Glanville's desire becomes the subject when she scornfully refuses his hand, both literally and figuratively.

The male gaze not only provides Arabella with pleasure, it also contributes to her power. The male gaze precipitates a male loss of action (or conversation) which, in turn, hastens his loss of power. For instance, the Gentleman with the chaise is

overwhelmed by her stature, shape, complexion, eyes and the "thousand Charms that adorned her whole Person." Her beauty stuns him into silence and robs him of "the Power to make her an Answer" (99). Similarly, Glanville forgets all her faults and even becomes "wholly lost" while gazing upon her beauty, which, acting like a drug, overpowers and confuses the gazer (154, 124).

In contrast to Hervey, the stranger with the chaise, and Glanville, Sir George controls his gaze, although he realizes that the passionate stare is a necessary articulating element to the language of romance. Sir George describes his "attentive Gaze" at the beautiful Philonice. Instead of forgetting who he is, he forgets that she is crouching at his feet. While he has control of the language, he can control and objectify this beauty. She has no voice and no name, remaining the "fair Unknown" for quite some time, until he is finished dissecting and describing her visage (242-243). But then, this is Sir George's own text and fantasy. His heroine, unlike Arabella, speaks only when she is spoken to. Ironically, Sir George's text, which attempts to place him as a hero in hopes of winning Arabella as his prize, denies his fictional heroines any self-awareness. Ideologically, he is the centre and the power of his story: the fictional heroines' thoughts or concerns are his creations. He has also situated himself so that he is gazed upon by his rapt listeners, thereby giving authority to his presence, as story-teller, not unlike Arabella's presence when she describes the characters from her romances. Significantly, it is his wandering eye and indiscriminate gaze which finally brings about his ruin in Arabella's own eyes.

These individual, private gazers prefigure the public gaze Arabella encounters

later at Vauxhall and at the assembly in Bath. Both these episodes of the attentive gaze are complicated by the singularity of Arabella's dress. In "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse," Kaja Silverman argues that historically "sartorial extravagance was a mark of aristocratic power and privilege, and as such a mechanism for tyrannizing over rather than surrendering to the gaze of the (class) other" (139). Male dress often surpassed female attire in extravagance and elegance. The myth is that if one is seen and admired, this publicity confirms one's power.[7] By the end of the eighteenth century and long after the publication of *The Female Quixote*, male dress underwent a shift, referred to by Silverman as "The Great Masculine Renunciation," during which sartorial sobriety, a manifestation of the rising middle class, rejected the more flamboyant and ostentatious styles of the aristocracy (140-41).

While men could express their exhibitionist and narcissistic desires through their work and sport, women continue to rely on fashionable apparel to elicit the gaze. At Vauxhall, for instance, it is Arabella's singularity of dress which draws a number of gazers. Although she is greatly embarrassed by the attention, she finds the experience "delightful" (334). This experience, contrary to the Mulvey paradigm, does not silence Arabella into an icon of male desire. Instead, the public gaze loosens her tongue to

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[7] I was reminded by Isobel Grundy that Henry V relies much on visual display for his political aspirations. The king explains that his power and authority are derived from "ceremony" which he later enunciates as "the balm, the scepter, and the ball, the sword, the mace, the crown imperial, *the intertissued robe of gold and pearl*" (*Henry V* IV.i.245, 265-67. Italics mine). Silverman notes that men have always been intrigued by clothing, particularly the recently more ornate women's dress, citing *Pamela*, *Madame Bovary*, *Sister Carrie*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, and *Lolita* (142).

speak in defence of the prostitute disguised as a boy, another sartorial spectacle. At the assembly at Bath, Arabella's novelty in dress, again, attracts the attention of the public. Her diversionary dress must be seen as intentional exhibitionism, especially since, as Margaret Dalziel points out, her clothing is very "striking" in its difference (see Notes to page 271). Arabella herself goes to great lengths to resemble one of her romantic heroines, the Princess Julia, although she is told by her mantua maker that the styles have greatly changed in the last two thousand years (270).[8] While the stares provide Arabella with great pleasure, they bring upon Glanville "some Confusion" (271) and upon Charlotte Glanville, her jealous antagonist, disappointment that the expected sneers actually become deference and awe. The public "found themselves aw'd to Respect by that irresistible Charm in the Person of Arabella, which commanded Reverence and Love from all who beheld her" (272). Even the "occasional Humourist," possibly Lennox's jab at the reader who sees this novel as a parody, is silenced "when the Sight of the devoted fair One repell'd his Vivacity, and the design'd Ridicule of the whole Assembly" (272). Arabella's presence and the gaze it occasions paralyse the assembly into a "respectful Silence" (272). Unlike the ingenues of the screen, Arabella is aware of the assembly's directed looks and associates the gaze with flattery and respect. The gaze not only arms Arabella with

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[8] Charlotte Lennox may have had in mind a real life Arabella in the historical Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673). She was noted for both her fantastical antique dress and intelligent discourse (Grant 15, 17). She was also the first woman invited to visit the Royal Society (Grant 23). In Pepys *Diary*, he describes his numerous attempts to catch a glimpse of this famous woman, whose life, he says, was "a romance" (qtd in Grant 15).

the notion of her power as heroine but it also weakens the men around her by silencing them into submission and so providing her with the opportunity to speak for the heroines of antiquity.

Arabella, in speaking to her cousin Charlotte, details the recipe for a hero's life, in which silence is an important ingredient. He must, she says, bury "his Passion in Silence for many Years" until he explodes with repressed passion and despair. His mistress, unbeknownst to the hero, is strategically placed to overhear his confession because a hero will die rather than voice his passions to his mistress (284-85). Arabella's pronouncements appropriate the authoritative tone associated with the more masculine judiciary. She explains that the "unhappy Criminals," the outspoken heroes, "are so conscious of the Justice of their Doom, that they never murmur against their Judge," the heroine who condemns them with a "Sentence of Banishment or Silence" (147). Having no presence or a voice would engender their powerlessness. In other words, in the world of the Scudéry romances Arabella reads, the man must submit to the woman, who "has absolute Power over his Life" (146).

According to these romances, man's reputation rests on his sword (128), a rather phallic metaphor which is more apt than her audience will allow. Arabella's commands to Glanville to bring her the head of the imposter (127) and her description of a hero "weltering" in his own blood at his mistress's feet (194) make a man's reputation a dangerous and costly enterprise. Even the silly Charlotte Glanville is silenced by Arabella's prescription of bloody violence for heroes or for ravishers, whose death is the ultimate silencer. She cautions Sir George that if he persists in

declaring his love for her, he certainly must die (175)--a necessary survival strategy for Arabella, whom the loquacious Sir George wants to marry only for her inheritance.

In this revealing episode in which Arabella counsels male silence, the real hero listens to Arabella's words, obeying her dictum, while Sir George attempts to manipulate language to influence and control her. Sir George, without directly telling Arabella he loves her, anticipates that Arabella will see himself in his description of the man "who by his Looks, Sighs, and Solicitude to please her, by his numberless Services and constant Attendance of her makes it evident," without using language, that he "is possessed with a violent Passion for her" (147). In fact, Sir George is actually describing the present but silenced Glanville who knows, using Arabella's own words, that "he gains nothing by the Discovery of his Passion," but loses the advantages of seeing his mistress every day, a loss worse than death (147).

Sir George, on the other hand, is not permanently silenced until after his telling of his history. He does include in his story the heroic code of silence when he claims he was "obstinately silent with my tongue" (245). But, like his wandering eyes, his loose tongue contributes to his fall from grace. In addition to silencing Sir George (99, 256-57), Arabella silences the gentleman with the chaise (99), the assembly at Bath (272), Sir Charles (204), Mr. Tinsel (269), and notably the comic Selvin, who "by his Silence confess'd her Superiority" (273; also 313). Later Selvin in her presence attempts "to break his mysterious Silence," but he can only utter a "preluding Hem" (288). In order to silence the impertinence of the men around her, Arabella does not need to speak. Even her own silence can reduce the most ardent lover to a

fool. Hervey, who believes Arabella has sent him a reply instead of his own returned letter, snatches it from Lucy, the messenger, and kisses it in a "Rapture of Joy." His confusion and embarrassment, when opening his own letter, exposes his absurd and ridiculous actions (14). He never writes another letter to Arabella.

Arabella's fixation on romance, with its stringent demands for the man's silence, eventually, the text insinuates, leads to madness. Glanville, who has remained silent (318) or "dumb" (336) throughout much of the novel,[9] eventually has an outburst, crying out that Arabella will make him go "distracted" enough to hang himself (318). He accuses her of making him "quite mad" (107) when he is "almost mad with Vexation" (190). Ultimately, his association with Arabella drives him to the "Madness" (354) needed to attack his rival. While Arabella can "charm" her audience into a "respectful Silence" (272), as do the romances that charm Arabella, the text suggests that she can, with her language, also enchant men into madness, as a mermaid enchants her sailor victims.

Just as silence leads to madness in Glanville--an indication that silence is not natural for man--Arabella is thought to be mad because she is *not* silent. Her uncle claims she "talks very oddly, and has the strangest Conceits" (64). After hearing Arabella speak of romances, Sir Charles theorizes she is in a "Delirium" (60) and that romances have "put strange Notions into [young people's] Heads" (61). Her words eventually convince him she is suffering from "Madness" (200). Others who hear Arabella talk also believe "her Brain [is] disturbed" (102) or "disorder'd" (301) or "her

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[9] Only Selvin seems to imitate Glanville's silence and madness (313).

Head is a little turned" (201; also see 317, 336, 339, 340, 352, 358, 367). Arabella's speeches are also linked to the power she exerts over others. As Spacks has aptly said, in reference to *The Female Quixote*, "control of language implies control of action" (541-42). Arabella desires control of her interpretations of experience. The social constructions, however, that Arabella encounters allow only specific roles for women (and men). A woman who speaks, exerts power, and, in general, inverts social roles must be mad. Likewise, a man who is powerless and silent, an assumed aberration, must be insane. Arabella's use of language presupposes insanity in the patriarchal, Glanville world. Her voice, articulating the language of romance, drowns out the other voices. Instead of being "silent, submissive, invisible" (Langbauer, "Romance Revised" 49), the woman's reputation in Arabella's world depends "upon the Noise and Bustle she makes in the World" (128).

In contrast to Arabella's fictional but very much alive world of romances, the countess describes her own very sterile and deadening life (327). She fails, however, to mention her more exciting life as a reader of romances (323). Arabella, on the other hand, questions and fears what is expected of her in the non-romantic world:

> What room, I pray you, does a Lady give for high and noble Adventures, who consumes her Days in Dressing, Dancing, listening to Songs, and ranging the Walks with People as thoughtless as herself? How mean and contemptible a Figure must a Life spent in such idle Amusements make in History? Or rather, Are not such Persons always buried in Oblivion, and can any Pen be found who would condescend to record such inconsiderable Actions? (279)

Obviously, Arabella is destined to be a heroine whose adventures, worth recounting, arise because she reads romances.

Arabella's conversation covers two general topics derived from romances: one, primarily based on morality and character traits, draws admiration from her listeners; the other, primarily concerned with women, draws derision and embarrassment. In other words, not only is a noisy woman mad, but the topic of woman is also taboo. The conversations that appear to be "modelled on historical writers or moral essays" (Langbauer, *Women and Romance* 69), but which actually fill pages of Scudéry's romances, seem to show Arabella's sensible or intelligent side. For instance, when Arabella speaks on indifference or perseverance as a character trait, Glanville, a textual marker for approval of her speeches, is pleased because he prefers a woman who is strongly attracted to an idea rather than one who is indifferent. Charlotte Glanville, in contrast to the fervent Arabella, always affects "great Inattention" whenever Arabella is speaking (311). The indifferent Charlotte, who speaks the language of the coquette, is held up, by the other characters, as the normal, sane "other" to Arabella. Charlotte's speech is never ridiculed, although it is "tedious" (83) and frivolous at the best of times. In an admirable speech, Arabella discusses the fine art of raillery. Those who endeavour to rail, she says, often "become the Objects of Ridicule themselves" (268). Her discourse underscores the fate of Charlotte Glanville, who ridicules Arabella whenever she can. Charlotte eventually marries Sir George, whose motives and sincerity are seriously questioned. At the end, the reader of *The Female Quixote*, observing the dismal future of the real object of sarcasm, realizes that Arabella is not

one of the ridiculed. After hearing this speech on raillery, Glanville is "charmed to hear her talk so rationally" (268). And Sir Charles expresses "much Admiration of her Wit, telling her, if she had been a Man, she would have made a great Figure in Parliament, and that her Speeches might have come perhaps to be printed in time" (311). This speech by a woman, and not a man, will be printed, as Lennox intended when she wrote this dialogue. Ironically this rational speech comes from one of Arabella's romances, Madeleine de Scudéry's *Artamenes or the Grand Cyrus* (translated 1653), in which "raillery" is examined and discussed (9.III.140-41). Rather than being on the "most trifling Subjects imaginable" as Glanville notes (49), the conversations found throughout Scudéry's novels are about love, marriage, and a woman's place in society (Aronson 82). Since Arabella's cloistered life has been devoted mainly to reading romances, it is not surprising that many of her topics of conversation, the intelligent as well as the irrational, are derived from romances.

Arabella's other topic of conversation, women in society, provides her listeners with the opinion that she is mad. Through reading romances, Arabella sees a different social position for woman, one which frees her from patriarchal demands and limitations. While society tends to degrade woman, Arabella praises her. Referring to the famous seventeenth-century French romance writer, Scudéry, Arabella comments that "he"[10] alone praised the "inimitable Poetess Sappho" as being "remarkably chaste"

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[10] Interestingly, Arabella believes Scudéry was a man, although at the time, it was common knowledge that Madeleine published under her brother's name, Georges (Aronson 18, 54). While we can assume Lennox knew Scudéry was a woman, Arabella's ignorance of this fact, due to her cloistered experience, emphasizes the hypocrisy generated around romances. Lennox seems to accuse men of usurping the

and not a "loose Wanton" (62). Clearly, a parallel is made between Arabella's elevating maligned women and Scudéry's performing of similar heroics. For example, despite the men who attack the legendary Cleopatra, calling her a "whore" and "gypsey" (105, 207), Arabella religiously defends her (62, 141). Furthermore, Arabella identifies the misfortunes that happen to fictional heroines of antiquity as those that happen to her real contemporaries. She supports the infamous Miss Groves against Charlotte Glanville's attacks by comparing the "chaste" contemporary to the "chaste" Cleopatra (140) and she asserts that the "Misfortunes" of the disguised prostitute resemble those of the beautiful Aspasia (335). It is also appropriate in this battle for power that Arabella conjures up the image of the Amazon, Thalestris, who besides being a "perfect beauty" was "the most stout and courageous of her Sex" (125), and accordingly was offered "the chief Command of their Forces." Sir Charles, echoing society's views, cannot imagine a world in which power is freely given to a woman (205), while his daughter believes Thalestris must have been a "very masculine Sort of Creature" (125). Finally, in this paradigm of the defenders of women, Scudéry / Arabella, we cannot forget Lennox herself, who, like Scudéry, is a woman author of romance. Lennox valorizes the reading woman in society. Obviously, it is not the "other," Charlotte Glanville, who is valorized, but Arabella and her pursuit of reading

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maligned romance, from Arabella's father, who moves her mother's romances into his library, to Sir George, who is the author himself of two manipulative romances. Arabella, denied knowledge the general public possessed, must ultimately blame her father who kept her entombed in his castle, and not the romances that fantasize, supposedly, about knowledgeable women avoiding the very ravishers her father echoes in imprisoning her.

Arabella's reading provides the female reader with more elevated subjects than those Glanville suggests should be her interests; that is, women should bear passively the addresses from and passions of lovers (44). Arabella, on the other hand, argues that reading romances would dispel such frivolous discourses, supplying the woman with useful knowledge:

> For Heaven's sake, Cousin, resumed Arabella, laughing, how have you spent your Time; and to what Studies have you devoted all your Hours, that you could find none to spare for the Perusal of Books from which all useful Knowledge may be drawn; which give us the most shining Examples of Generosity, Courage, Virtue, and Love; which regulate our Actions, form our Manners, and inspire us with a noble Desire of emulating those great, heroic, and virtuous Actions, which made those Persons so glorious in their Age, and so worthy Imitation in ours? (48)

Over fifty years later, this same sentiment is repeated by another woman author of romances, Jane Austen, who wrote another "parody" of romances. Austen also argued for the necessity of a heroine, not a hero, to defend other heroines: "if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard?" (Austen 37).

Not only do romances provide knowledge of virtuous and honourable traits, but they also provide a context in which women can pass down their inheritance to other women. Had it not been for the "inimitable Pen of the famous Scudery," Arabella says, the lives and actions of the most virtuous, fair, and chaste women would not

have been "delivered down to Posterity" (62). The romances she reads are handed down from her mother. Romances, written by women for women, provide a space for female bonding and companionship, of which Arabella is in need (Langbauer, *Women and Romance* 89). This need for female bonding becomes more evident when Arabella meets the Countess, who expresses herself "in Language so conformable to her own" (325). Glanville, ironically, hopes that the "Conversation of so admirable a Woman," the countess, will be the cure of Arabella's "foible" (323). Charlotte, however, cannot understand Arabella (83) or even pronounce her words properly (309). Like Charlotte, Miss Groves is "little qualified for partaking a Conversation so refined as Arabella's . . . since it was neither upon Fashions, Assemblies, Cards, or Scandal" (68, also 79). Likewise, Arabella is disgusted with the insipid conversation of the Richmond ladies (341, 361).

Arabella needs the sanctuary of her romances where women gain a voice. Langbauer, whose study examines the positive and empowering association between women and romances, identifies this genre as a meeting place for women ("Romance Revised" 44). Arabella comments that princesses in captivity "related their miraculous Adventures to each other." She describes them as "Companions in Misfortune, to whom they might freely communicate their Adventures, which otherwise might, haply, have been concealed, or, at least, have been imperfectly delivered down to us" (261). When chance brought women together, they confided with one another their innermost thoughts (327), which the romance, a generative text, documents and passes down to women like Arabella and the Countess. Romances allow Arabella (and other

confiding women) a platform from which she can express her rebellion; her repressed sexuality, which if voiced would put her under a man's control; and her fantasy of power in which a look or a word is enough for her to gain control (Langbauer, "Romance Revised" 45). Finally, Arabella is right to view her world as a romance, since the novel in which she stars is one describing the meeting, courtship, and eventual union between the heroine and the hero, Glanville. She fears, as do the readers, that her marriage will mark the end of all her adventures (138), as of course it will.

Chapter Three

Controlling the Imagination: Education in *The Doctor's Wife*

> You like not that French novel? Tell me why.
> You think it quite unnatural. Let us see.
> The actors are, it seems, the usual three:
> Husband, and wife, and lover. She--but fie!
> In England we'll not hear of it.
>
> George Meredith, *Modern Love* (1862), XXV

Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915), a popular and prolific writer, made her reputation on the sensational novel of the 1860s. But the critics, contrary to the popular attitude at the book stalls and libraries, denounced Braddon's crime-riddled pages: their sensitive morality was offended and outraged by golden-haired "angels" who rid themselves of an extra husband or two.[1] Later, when Braddon's finances and her public were secure, she wrote a novel to please herself. *The Doctor's Wife*, published in 1864, becomes problematic for the reviewers who are expecting more of the sensational plot; this time, Braddon concentrated more on character,[2] a trait not associated with the sensation genre (Hughes 25-26). Like Braddon's own readers, Isabel Sleaford, the heroine, reads voraciously, much against the wishes of the offended and colourless villagers of the appropriately named Graybridge. Many critics, both then and now, read Isabel's romantic interpretation of her experiences as

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[1] See "Lady Audley's Secret," *The Spectator* (October 25, 1862), p. 1197; Alfred, "Our Novels," *Temple Bar* (June 1870), p. 424; Page, "The Morality of Literary Art," *Contemporary Review* V (June 1867), pp. 161-189; Oliphant, "Novels," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* CII (1867), pp. 257-281.

[2] See her letters to Bulwer Lytton, "Devoted Disciple," *Harvard Library Bulletin*.

an attack against novel reading.[3] But Isabel, like Arabella, both moral registers of their romances, has more to teach others than they can teach her: her imagination not only drives the plot, but it also transforms both George and Roland into heroes. At the end, Isabel is rewarded, a sign that she is to be viewed as a model, not a warning.

Despite the accusations that sensational novels were immoral, Braddon presented her readers with an English morality in which she "punished wrong-doing and showed in the end that irregular unions and moral transgressions produced unhappiness" (Terry 60). Although a simplistic overview of her novels, this generally explains, for instance, why the famous circulating library, Mudie's, carried at one time forty-six Braddon titles (Terry 12) when other writers, such as George Moore, were considered too immoral to stock (Terry 7). Mudie's prided itself on providing readers with "safe, wholesome and entertaining" books (Terry 7). Obviously, Braddon was seen as satisfying these requirements. If Braddon was writing morally correct novels, in this case presumably against novel-reading, then why would she permit her novel-reading heroine to continue reading and be rewarded with an inheritance at the end? I will argue that Braddon's heroine, although initially deluded by and mocked for her reading, is more complicated than a first glance would reveal. Isabel reads, like Arabella before her, as a provision for what she has not. Books provide an alternative view of the world that is denied both Arabella and Isabel. While the powerless Arabella seeks power in her French romances, Isabel, married to a dutiful and dreary doctor, seeks beauty and love. For if women can only expect a world of making

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[3] See Judith Mitchell, p. 22.

puddings and darning socks, then the novel provides a welcome relief to these heroines.

Most of the contemporary reviews recognise and praise Braddon's efforts. Oliphant, although morally offended by most of Braddon's novels, grudgingly admits that this novel "strikes . . . a higher note," suggesting that the plagiarism from the "French story" is allowable since Braddon accommodated "that which comes natural to the French" to the more civilised English taste ("Novels" 263).[4] She does insinuate, however, in a thinly veiled personal insult, that Braddon's more humble background contributes to her heroine's differences: she "might not be aware how young women of good blood and good training feel" (260). On a more complimentary note and agreeing with Braddon's own assessment, reviews in both *The Saturday Review* (November 5, 1864) and the *Spectator* (October 22, 1864) describe her novel as one of "character" ("The Doctor's Wife," *Saturday* 571; "Miss Braddon's New Novel," *Spectator* 1214).

As in most commentary of the period, the evaluations focus on the social implications of her novel. Whether in praise or condemnation, her reviewers point out that Braddon "very nearly wrote what was literally true" (Rae 197), and Isabel "is nevertheless drawn out with a degree of consistency which brings it within the pale of real life" ("The Doctor's Wife," *Saturday* 572). Isabel Sleaford, intimates *the Saturday Review*, "is artistically true to the type of human nature which the novelist has set

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[4] See the discussion later on *Madame Bovary*, the "French story," and *The Doctor's Wife*, the English one.

herself to portray" (571). Isabel, the reviewer suggests, is the new "Quixote," the new idealist whose visions of the world contrast with dull reality: "No Quixote ever held more devoutly to the reality of his dreams of chivalry and romance than did Isabel to the truth of the visions in which she formed the central figure" (571). The faithful Isabel is to be praised and commended because, as Rae in *The North British Review* explains, "the wife is the sufferer" (197). Clearly, Braddon intends the reader to sympathize with her continually misunderstood and slandered heroine, whose future in Graybridge does appear colourless.

Many reviews of *The Doctor's Wife*, however, follow a different pattern. They easily label the wife frivolous and erring rather than cast aspersions against the "superior" husband. One such review criticizes Isabel but commends George for not having the weakness of an imagination:

> In the "Doctor's Wife" . . . . Every effort of ingenuity and sophistication, is brought to bear, to enlist our pity in behalf of a weak, erring, frivolous young creature, who wilfully ignores the fact, she h[illegible] good fortune to possess a husband, far her superior, in all that truly constitutes superiority. This noxious and offensive specimen of womankind, in reality the victim of ignorance, vanity, and selfishness, blind to the merits of her husband, in that she is mentally and morally so far beneath him, it is the authoress's design should absorb our compassion. . . . Yet this is the least part of the matter; for short-comings in the *savoir vivre* of a husband, we learn, are an inducement to, and a palliating reason for, a wife's dabbling in the elementary stages of adultery.

("Sensational Novels," *Victoria Magazine* 459)

The author's manipulation of "reality" in which the wife is justified in seeking companionship outside the marriage is an affront to this reviewer, who voices fear of widespread comparisons between commonplace husbands and fictional heroes.

This comparison between the real and the ideal is echoed in two articles both published in the October 22, 1864 issue of *The Spectator*. In the review of Braddon's novel, the writer praises Braddon for contributing "something to fiction which will be remembered" ("Miss Braddon's New Novel" 1215). The reviewer articulates that "something" when contrasting Isabel's inner life (the gift or curse of a romantic imagination) to her "ordinary" surroundings (1214) which also consist of a "heavy young man with . . . no imagination at all" (1215). The reviewer, sympathising with Isabel because of her "sordid surroundings," expects the heroine to find solace in novels. Yet novels, the reviewer continues, also produce "discontent . . . among imaginative girls" (1214). This discontent with women's ordinary and boring lives is enunciated in an article in the same *Spectator* issue. Entitled "The Effect of Novel-Reading on Girls," the article criticizes Braddon's *The Doctor's Wife*, surprisingly, for creating arguments against and not for novel-reading. Novel-reading cultivates women's imagination too much, forcing them to lead two lives at once. The article, in general, fears for the disparity and growing chasm between the "inner and outer life"; in particular, the article fears women will reject that "struggling doctor, or rising lawyer, or pre-occupied man of commerce" because daughters now want "heroes, people of boundless wealth and heroic horsemanship, perfect natures and an irresistible

smile" ("The Effect of Novel-Reading on Girls" 1208). Novels, creating "unreal pictures" (1209), teach women to "despise this silent and uneventful worship" and, instead, to "long for careers, for duty which shall be great as well as useful" (1208-1209).

Never do the contemporary reviewers comment on Braddon's veiled suggestion that Isabel should have married for love rather than convenience, perhaps still a concept more prevalent in novels than in middle-class society. If women, encouraged by their romances, seek love in marriage, the Georges of Graybridge ought to be concerned. In this equation, average men must worry that their guaranteed patriarchal position in the family will be usurped by a sympathising, introspective hero. The real objection to *The Doctor's Wife* appears to be the construction of an unrealistic hero to contrast with the realistic onion-munching, radish-crunching doctor. Men find it easy to construct the angel in the house but balk at being constructed themselves.

Like Sigismund Smith, her fictional sensational author in *The Doctor's Wife* (1864), Braddon was always torn between "a noble desire to attain something like excellence--and a very ignoble wish to earn plenty of money" (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 25). Finally, after five novels in three years, she decided to write her great literary novel. Published serially in *Temple Bar*, a periodical launched by her 'husband' John Maxwell,[5] between January and December 1864, *The Doctor's Wife* more closely approaches Braddon's notion of excellence than any of her previous works. This is evident from her self-deprecatory letters to Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton;

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[5] See Sadleir on Braddon's publishing history with John Maxwell, pp. 69-83.

in one dated January 17th, 1864, she writes of her new novel:

> I venture to think you will like my new story "The Doctor's Wife" (this is not a title of my own choosing) better than anything I have yet done, because I am going in a little for the subjective, & for the first time am going to try to infuse a dash of poetry into my hero. (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 19)

Again in a letter dated June 24th, 1864, Braddon reiterates her hopes for a *magnum opus*:

> I venture to hope that you will like "The Doctor's Wife," which I shall have the pleasure of sending you before the end of October [1864] better than anything I have yet done--though still unutterably far away from what I want to do, when I read your books, & a few others of the same calibre. (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 21)

And later that summer, during which *The Doctor's Wife* was appearing serially, she says "I have done my best with this book, and the writing of it has been a labour of love" (22). She mentions that she has infused more "character painting in it" and has "given it more thought than anything else" (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 21)

During this period (1863 to 1864), Braddon indicates in her letters a growing interest in the French novel. *The Doctor's Wife* demonstrates influence by such writers as Balzac, Soulié (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 14), and especially the meticulous Flaubert:

> Since I have been writing so much, I have scarcely read at all, except a French novel now & then, by snatches. . . . Have you read anything of Gustave

> Flaubert's, & do you like that extraordinary Pre-Raphaelite style. I have been wonderfully fascinated by it, but I suppose all that unvarnished realism is the very reverse of poetry. (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 19, 20)

In particular, Braddon discovers Flaubert's scandalous masterpiece, *Madame Bovary* (1856). In a letter, dated summer 1864, she qualifies her enthusiasm for Flaubert, however, by complimenting his style (his "unvarnished realism") rather than his content (his "hideous immorality"):

> There seems an extraordinary Pre-Raphaelite power of description--a power to make manifest a scene & an atmosphere in a few lines--almost a few words--that very few writers possess--& a grim kind of humour equal to Balzac in its way. (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 22)

Her interest in a French writer whose manner of writing seemed homologous with the Pre-Raphaelite style of painting always remained in the background of her novels (see, for example, the portrait of Lady Audley and the portrayal of Roland Lansdell). In *The Doctor's Wife*, she consciously imitates Flaubert.

Superficially, the women in *Madame Bovary* and *The Doctor's Wife* share a similar situation common to many wives married to professionals: both, having time on their hands, are married to boring country doctors. Intertextually, *The Doctor's Wife* becomes more significant when the novels are compared. Despite their similar environments, their characters are dissimilar. Emma Bovary, believing that a change must always improve the situation, marries the "officier de santé" of Tostes. She devours what pleasure she can as wife of Charles Bovary in their limited sphere. She

craves money and desires carnal pleasure. Her insatiable appetite eventually frightens off her lovers, first the high bourgeois Rodolphe and then the scholarly Léon, and encourages the merchant Lheureux to lend her money, which she cannot pay back. This indebtedness and impending bankruptcy, and not her failed love affairs, are the cause of her suicide. She poisons herself, and her lovers continue to live and prosper in their own ways.

In contrast to the French novel, Braddon generates an English novel, although from the beginning she leads us to believe we are reading an English novel imitating a French one. Victorian readers, caught between their visible prudery and their hidden fascination with crime and vice, could not openly accept a novel about adultery. Even Braddon's bigamy novels hide sexual passion under the disguise of marriage, although illegal. Twentieth-century critics are aware of the limitations under which she wrote; Braddon confines her plots to those acceptable to her readers:

> If her public and the taste of the day would have tolerated it, Miss Braddon could have made good use of a greater freedom. In nearly every one of her plots there is a situation which would normally have arisen out of, or would normally develop into, some sexual irregularity. But it never does. An unconvincing twist is given to the story, and the impermissible is avoided. (Sadleir 79)

In this less scandalous, English novel, Isabel Sleaford initially believes, like her French counterpart, that a change must always be for the better (92), but she matures and, by the end of the novel, she no longer believes this (214). Isabel marries the

doctor, George Gilbert of Graybridge (the Yonville-l'Abbaye equivalent), only to discover that they have nothing in common. Although Emma and Isabel both escape their unhappy marriages by reading romances, Isabel, unlike Emma, easily finds fulfilment in the sensational novels she 'devours.' She loves and is loved by the local landowner, Roland Lansdell, but she remains physically faithful to her husband.

The ending to *The Doctor's Wife*, perhaps, reveals most about Braddon's intentions since it shows the greatest contrast to that of *Madame Bovary*. Unlike Emma, who is deserted by both lovers and dies in debt, Isabel inherits the estates of her husband, who dies of typhoid fever, and her lover, who is killed by her father. Braddon's artistic independence is evident in her handling of the closure of *The Doctor's Wife*. She appears to have been determined to keep Isabel a heroine who is rewarded with riches, even while she offends the propriety of English provincial middle-class society as represented by the gossips and the scandal-mongers of Graybridge (356).

Concerned about its possible reception, Braddon evidently sought Bulwer-Lytton's advice. In a letter dated September 7, 1864, she tells him that

> It is very, very kind of you to give me a good word about the "D.'s Wife," and I full well know how valuable any such word must be. I am especially anxious about this novel; as it seems to me a kind of turning point in my life (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 25).

Bulwer-Lytton's "good word" must have included a suggestion for altering the ending. By indications expressed in Braddon's reply, her mentor must have approved the

lover's demise but disliked the good and boring husband's illness (the result of working too hard) and his subsequent death. One can only imagine what moral precept Bulwer-Lytton would have imparted. Braddon tactfully apologizes for not heeding his advice and blames herself for being too hurried to correct the ending:

> I most entirely concur in all you say about the close of the "D.W." I was cruelly hurried in writing it, and only towards the last decided upon what I should do with George & Isabel. I always meant Sleaford to kill Roland, but to the last I was uncertain what to do with George. My original intention was to have left him alive, & Isabel reconciled to a commonplace life doing her duty bravely, and suppressing all outward evidence of her deep grief for Roland. Thus the love story would have only been an episode in a woman's life--succeeded by an after existence of quiet work and duty. I think, now it is too late, I might have done much better with the story in this way, but I am so apt to be influenced by little scraps of newspaper criticism, & by what people say to me. And I sometimes fancy I am rather like one of those most unprofitable race horses that "shut up at the finish." (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 26)

The sincerity of Braddon's concurrence with Bulwer-Lytton's suggested ending seems very doubtful. Her excuse of being hurried when she had "plenty of copy for the printers" (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 24) is not consistent and she never adequately explains why she killed George off when her "original intention" was to keep him alive. Whether Braddon agreed with Bulwer-Lytton's suggestion or not, she left

unchanged the ending to the novel which she thought would determine whether she would "sink or swim" (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 25).

In both *Madame Bovary* and *The Doctor's Wife*, the characters are deluded by their illusions of reality. Not only is Emma, in *Madame Bovary*, deluded by images of grandeur, but so are most of the other characters, such as her inept husband and their ambitious neighbour, M. Homais. Flaubert's characters are unable to view their world objectively. Rousset, in his essay "Madame Bovary: Flaubert's Anti-Novel," goes so far as to say that every perception is someone's particular illusion (Rousset 441). Braddon's characters in *The Doctor's Wife* are, in this particular notion, no different. However, the only illusory view of the world presented in the novel, at first glance, appears to be Isabel's. Because she feeds on romantic and sensational fiction, Isabel wants to be a "heroine" (23) and mistakes George Gilbert, the parish doctor, for a hero: "she decked him in her own fancies, and deluded herself by imaginary resemblances between him and the heroes in her books" (91). Isabel constructs fantasies based on the fiction she reads. But the other characters also have their fantasies. Sigismund Smith, the sensational author, wants to write a "*magnum opus*" but is stuck writing "for his public" (7). In other words, he is torn between writing great fiction and making money. George, the unexciting husband, deludes himself in various ways, such as initially denying that he loves Isabel (51, 54, 56), later imagining his proposal to the dark-eyed girl (68), and finally denying his own mortality when he is sick (281). Roland Lansdell, the erudite lover, when a young man, imagined that he loved Gwendoline, his aristocratic cousin (130), and later, in his

maturity, that Isabel would willingly be his mistress (250 to 252).

By the end of the novel, these characters have had their fantasies smashed. They wake up to reality: the romantic Roland realizes that he never understood the depths of Isabel's sentimental heart (343); the unromantic George (already dead to the reader) faces his own impending death in an uncharacteristically heroic manner (328); and the increasingly wealthy creator of romances never writes his *magnum opus*. Isabel's perception of the world, however, closely resembles the reality in Braddon's novel: Isabel *is* the heroine of the novel and George's heroic death confirms her initial view of George as hero. On another level, the book we initially read as parody ends up supporting and valuing Isabel's reading. The more Isabel experiences life beyond her father's garden enclosure, the more her interpretation of the novels she reads matures.

Both George and Roland believe that they have to impart their sense of reality to Isabel, whom they see as hopelessly romantic. These men take it upon themselves to change Isabel into their own perceptions of woman. Isabel is educated and develops from a foolish child into a mature woman. The mature woman outgrows her self-styled teachers, whom death dispatches, and attaches herself not to a hero but to another "wise and good woman," Gwendoline Pomphrey (343). *The Doctor's Wife* does not end with the marriage of the heroine and hero but with the friendship of two heroines.

Isabel's education follows various stages, consisting of conventional middle-class schooling, her self-directed reading of romantic poetry and fiction, George's

lectures on the concept of the Victorian wife, Roland's instruction in the concept of the Victorian mistress, and finally friendship with Gwendoline, who teaches nothing but represents a mature Victorian woman. Isabel receives a "half-and-half education which is popular with the poorer middle classes" (23). At the Albany Road Seminary, she learns a little Italian and enough French to read the novels which, according to the narrator, English society would prefer to be left unread; she knows history only as the romantic adventures of famous heroines, colourful queens, and wicked poisoners; she plays the piano, sings a little, and paints "wishy-washy" flowers resembling nothing like nature, emblematic of her narrowed sight: "the passion flowers were apt to come out like blue muslin frills, and the fuchsias might have been mistaken for prawns by short-sighted people" (22).

Braddon satirizes typical female education as inadequate because it teaches women to rely on novels as books of conduct. For example, when Isabel wishes to accept Roland's luncheon invitation, she looks into Dickens's *Dombey and Son* for an example of the type of reply she should write (147). But Mrs. Granger (Edith Dombey) never needs to present "her compliments to Mr. Dombey" nor does Florence have "the pleasure to inform Mr. Gay . . ." (148). This satirical episode is very close to the truth: middle-class women were expected to learn their social functions from the novels they read. Rachel Brownstein, in *Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels*, might have been describing Isabel, who is perhaps more typical of the nineteenth-century woman than we wish to admit:

Generations of girls who did not read much of anything else, whose experience

> was limited by education, opportunity, and convention, have gone to fiction to escape a stifling or a boring or a confusingly chaotic reality . . . . Women who read have been inclined since the eighteenth century to understand one another, and men, and themselves, as characters in novels. (Brownstein xviii)

Kate Millet, in "The Debate Over Women," notes that J.S. Mill despised the current education offered to women "as a minimal literary acquaintance with decorative culture deliberately designed to be superficial . . . 'an education of the sentiments rather than of the understanding'" (128).

Because Isabel has had a typical middle-class woman's education, her romantic nature reigns supreme. In a neglected garden, neglected Isabel reads her favourite authors and dreams of herself in similar situations. In the act of reading (or consuming) a romantic novel, she is confronted by Sigismund Smith, the partial boarder living with her family. Sigismund, a writer of sensational fiction, wishes to introduce his friend George Gilbert to her; and, catching her in the act of reading, articulates the frustrations that most of the men in the novel feel about Isabel's passion for books:

> "I wish that was 'Colonel Montefiasco,'" said Mr. Smith, pointing to the book which the young lady was reading. "I should like to see a lady so interested in one of my books that she wouldn't so much as look up when a gentleman was waiting to be introduced to her." (19)

Reading, replacing introductions to young, eligible gentlemen, becomes a substitute for sexuality; extending this metaphor, then, one could picture excessive reading, an

improper consumption of a woman's time, as a secret passion that stimulates the senses and fertilizes young women's imaginations. Because the novels Isabel reads are respectable English novels carried by the circulating library, Isabel is surprised when Roland wants to consummate their love. Reading, for Isabel, gives her enough sensual delight without having to resort to the physical kind. Thus, women's reading becomes a threat to male virility.

Sigismund Smith, the purveyor of sensational excitement to young women, is an embodiment of Braddon, a hack writer herself (Wolff 109).[6] Sigismund, conscious of his unique relationship with Isabel, is the only character allowed to understand her (210). Furthermore, the fictional novelist crosses other, class boundaries: he has gone to school with both the aristocrat Roland and the professional George. In creating Sigismund, Braddon shows her awareness of the fiction producer/consumer relationship and projects this onto her own writing to draw attention to its construction of letters, sentences, and paragraphs. Her novels are self-referential; Sigismund Smith, for example, is both a creation and a creator, a fictional character and an author of sensational fiction. He is always concerned with inserting a realistic flavour into his three-volume novels.[7] He uses the real Isabel as a model for his fictional heroines

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[6] Braddon, who in four years produced seven novels, did most of the writing for Maxwell's *The Halfpenny Journal*, a subliterary periodical designed for the "tradesman's wife, the hard-working girl, and the shopboy" (Wolff 118-119). Also most of her books were sold as cheap "yellowbacks" at railway stations (Wolff 238).

[7] While Sigismund laments the fact that "fiction is not compatible with a healthy appetite" (171), Braddon introduces George, whose proclivity toward parsnips is an attempt to render realism in her fiction. Ironically, it is George and his healthy appetite which are incompatible with Isabel's fictions.

(25). In contrast, Braddon is continually reminding her readers, with figurative language, that they are reading a three-volume novel and not a history. In a typical example, Roland challenges the Graybridge gossips when he defies them to "paragraph me in their newspapers" (233). Of course his words are ominous since his death notice will eventually appear in their papers, just as his scandalous love and tragic death will appear as 'paragraphs' in Braddon's fiction (also see 196).

In addition to this unusual confrontation of the fiction producer with the fiction consumer, both their desires, through fiction, are contrasted and ultimately fulfilled. Sigismund is not overtly concerned about the effect his female creations as role models have on his female readers, such as Isabel. The writer of sensational fiction wants to make money to support himself. At the opening of the novel, he is being chased by publishers' due dates which in turn mean popularity and increased revenue. By the end, he has amassed "a very comfortable little independence from the cultivation of sensational literature in penny numbers" (361).

The female consumer of these novels, moreover, models herself on the novel-heroines. Isabel reads good, moral English novels, plentiful allusions to which fill the text: Dickens, Bulwer-Lytton, Thackeray, etc.[8] She does not read 'bad' or immoral French novels. And in the end, Isabel, already a heroine in a novel and a possible role

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[8] Even 'good' English novels can be 'bad' or poisonous, according to Carla Peterson. In *The Determined Reader*, she discusses protagonists, usually orphans, as readers who are trying to recapture symbolically the wholeness and unity lost with the mother. But, she continues, reading isolates the reader from the community, and therefore, is a "poison" and not a "remedy" (Peterson 28). For the orphan Isabel, however, it is precisely her reading of romance which attracts Sigismund Smith, George Gilbert, and Roland Lansdell.

model for female readers, becomes the English heroine she has always desired to be. Ironically, her own life mirrors her desperate heroines' situations. Her father, affectionately called Jack the Scribe by his partners in crime, supports his family by forging other men's signatures on bogus cheques. John Sleaford, a failed barrister turned criminal, is crucial to the text although largely absent. After he is found out by the law, Isabel is suddenly forced to make her own way in the world as a governess; when she marries Gilbert, she refuses to acknowledge her maiden (i.e. paternal) name; yet the father turns out to be the nemesis of the lover, Lansdell, whose testimony as a witness condemns Sleaford, the plagiarist of others' signatures, at trial.

Early in the novel, ignorant of her romantic future, Isabel compares her life to such characters as Dickens's Florence Dombey (23, 64, 79, 92, 94, 123, 148) and Edith Dombey (69, 79, 87, 91, 95, 139, 143, 167, 171, 178, 230, 319), Shakespeare's Juliet Capulet (64, 139, 233), and Thackeray's Beatrix Esmond (64); she dreams of Romantic heroes such as Thackeray's Henry Esmond (63), Bulwer-Lytton's Ernest Maltravers (63, 65, 69, 91, 167, 211, 243, 333), Dickens's James Steerforth (63, 65), and Scott's Edgar Ravenswood (91); and she imagines love affairs such as those between Rawdon Crawley and Becky Sharp (91), Rochester and Jane Eyre (87, 91), Beatrice Portinari and Dante (228, 231, 238), Leonora and Tasso (228), and Waller and Saccharissa (231). Isabel, referring to Edith Dombey the most of all the heroines, forces us to compare her to the more enigmatic Edith. It is interesting to note that Edith consciously finds herself between two men: her husband and Carker. In the end, Edith frees herself from both. Carker, like Roland, is a disappointed lover.

According to Isabel's interpretation, life for either a heroine or a hero must end in an early death. As the heroine of her own recurring fantasy, Isabel looks forward to a typically early heroine-like death: "But poor Isabel wanted her life to be like her favourite books; she wanted to be a heroine,--unhappy perhaps, and dying early. She had an especial desire to die early in a decline" (23).[9] After the heroine dies, the hero of Isabel's recurring fantasy looks broken-heartedly at the beautiful corpse, still ravishing in death, breaks a blood vessel, and dies himself (64, 107, 116, 159, 212). The hero and heroine never live long enough to consummate their love; instead, the climax of their union is their simultaneous deaths. Isabel's constant longing for the death of both hero and heroine is a displacement of desire for sexual union.[10] This becomes more evident in Isabel's confusion of the two terms as she dreams of heroes and heroines on strong, potent Arab steeds; her dreams culminate not in sexual consummation but in heroic death:

> And then the Row! She saw herself in the Row sometimes, upon an Arab--a black Arab--that would run away with her at the most fashionable time in the afternoon, and all but kill her; and then she would rein him up as no mortal woman ever reined in an Arab steed before . . . . And then the wicked prince .

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[9] Also see 72, 159, 181, 205, 212, 215, 220, 236, 241, 255, 276, 334.

[10] I will not argue the 'chicken or egg' question at which my discussion hints. Isabel is a product of her reading. If the novels she reads include death/sex desire, then she is only imitating the desires of her role models, mostly created by men. Neither Braddon nor Isabel are producing these desires, which already exist in both their readings. Perhaps this makes it easier for Isabel later to refuse Roland's sexual advances.

. . would fall ill . . . would break a blood-vessel and die! (107)

Already imagining herself as a forceful and physically active woman, Isabel later projects her own desire to be a heroine onto Lady Gwendoline. She imagines both Gwendoline and her cousin, Roland, riding Arabs in Rotten Row because "nobody worth speaking of ever rode anything but Arab horses." She pictures them in the glitter of high society, "going down to the grave through an existence of dinner-parties, and Rotten Row, and balls, and Ascot Cups" (121). Isabel's morbid fantasies, however, become the reality for others in the novel. Gwendoline, originally engaged to Roland, sees a better matrimonial catch in Lord Heatherland. But a month before his wedding to Gwendoline, Lord Heatherland breaks his neck when he falls from his horse during an Irish steeplechase (133) Ironically, Roland adopts Isabel's romantic fantasy when he creates a false accident to explain the fatal gash on his head: he tells everyone that his injuries were caused by his fall from a runaway horse. Thus, Isabel's real-life lover, like Gwendoline's lord, dies a prototypical romantic death [11]

Roland's death, however, is a consequence of his jealousy and Isabel's earlier refusal of him. Isabel does not become Roland's mistress; she has been educated well in English morality. Her English novels have supplied her with role models: she is a Jane Eyre who is horrified at the thought of unsanctioned copulation. She is definitely

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[11] The image of riding as a sexual metaphor has been used by many writers, both then and now. Robert Browning, for instance, connects sex with riding in "The Last Ride Together" (1855), a dramatic monologue:

> I and my mistress, side by side
> Shall be together, breathe and ride,
> So, one day more am I deified.
> Who knows but the world may end tonight? (Browning 608)

not an Isabel (Vane) Carlyle, a heroine in the popular sensational novel *East Lynne* (1861), who leaves her husband for the elegant Captain Levison and who, not surprisingly, is never mentioned by Braddon's Isabel. Isabel Carlyle's punishment is dragged through hundreds of pages and is only relieved for her and the reader by her welcomed death. The difference between Isabel Gilbert and Isabel Carlyle and the contrasting intentions of both novels make *East Lynne* an ironic intertext to the later, less moralistic one. Ironically, Braddon's habit of mocking the patriarchal novel of proper female conduct did not deter Ford Madox Ford from mistaking her for the author of *East Lynne* (Wolff 418). In Braddon's more controversial novel, both men die, while her Isabel does not. Moreover, Isabel remains faithful to her husband to the last; her sexual/death desire for Roland is left unfulfilled. In contrast to *Madame Bovary*, where the heroine attempts to satisfy her desires, Braddon writes an ironized English novel.

Like the romance heroine, Isabel is not a typical Victorian woman who cooks, cleans, and sews. Instead, she dreams of another world. Ironically, it is this that attracts the pedestrian George to her: "he fell to wondering about her again, and wondered why it was she was so different from Miss Sophronia Burdock and the young ladies of Graybridge-on-the-Wayverne" (26).[12] George represents the mid-century English temperament and his village, Graybridge, the typical boring 'gray' English provincial society. George went to the Classical and Commercial Academy and took over his father's practice. Like Mr. Dombey, he values continuity and is

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[12] Also see 30, 53, 62, 72, 83, 84, 104, 184, 249.

prejudiced against change. He is the epitome of patriarchal conservatism; thus, when his new bride suggests refurnishing their little house, George discourages any alteration:

> "I like it all the better for that, Izzie," he said; "it was my father's, you know, and his father's before him. I wouldn't change a stick of it for the world. Besides, it's such substantial furniture; they don't make such chairs and tables nowadays." (102)

Like his prototype, Charles Bovary, George Gilbert completely trusts his wife, that is, he lacks sufficient imagination to be jealous. The only compliment one can make about him comes from Charles Raymond, the altruistic old bachelor who employs Isabel as governess to his orphaned nieces. Raymond, who resembles Binet, the moral conscience of *Madame Bovary*, is a phrenologist: he observes George's head and comes to the conclusion that the young physician has a very solid moral capacity (63, 116, 135, 208). George's moral capacity, however, is no compensation for his dullness and stupidity. His conversation is so boring as to put his listeners to sleep (122) or force them to read while he speaks (106); amazingly, he loses his way coming down from a single-staircased turret (190).

Like Charles Bovary, George Gilbert is a failure. The character of each novel is summed up in one poignant episode. In *Madame Bovary*, Charles attempts to achieve medical success when he operates on the cripple Hippolyte's club foot (Part II, Chapter XI). Unfortunately, Hippolyte's leg becomes gangrenous and has to be amputated. Afterwards, the tap-tapping sound of Hippolyte's wooden leg is a constant

reminder of Charles's failure. Braddon also creates an episode emphasizing George's failures, although hers is comic: George must be saved from total degradation; he is to die a hero. During his courtship of Isabel, he is an occasional visitor at the house of her employer. George wishes to reciprocate Raymond's friendly hospitality and invites him, his nieces, and Isabel to dinner. Unfortunately, the doctor's food proves "bilious" to the orphans and "the experiment was not repeated" (90).

George, an initially ridiculous character, is a patriarchal failure, and his comic situations satirize the patriarchal order. It is ironic, then, that he is made to preach stereotypical theories on how a wife shall behave. His theories, Braddon seems to imply, should not be put into practice any more than his experiments initiated. George formulates his philosophy as he dreams of marrying Isabel:

> "When I marry, my wife must love the people I love," said George, who entertained those superb theories upon the management of a wife which are peculiar to youthful bachelors. (51)

And later, the narrator, who shapes our opinion, tells us that

> This young man discussed his matrimonial views with the calm grandiosity of manner with which man, the autocrat, talks of his humble slaves before he has tried his hand at governing them,--before he has received the fiery baptism of suffering, and learned by bitter experience that a perfect woman is not a creature to be found at every street corner waiting meekly for her ruler (55).

It is interesting to compare George's notion that one can find some anonymous woman on a street corner to fill his needs for a wife and Robert Audley's similar view of a

possible wife in a woman who stands on the street corner. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, a novel which certainly questions and ridicules Robert's behaviour and motives, Robert characteristically splashes the anonymous woman, with mud from the wheels of his fly. Both men seem to believe that the decision and choice to marry rests with the male alone. They view wives as waiting to be picked up at every street corner, women who either passively acquiesce to men's proposals or quietly accept the mud from their wheels.

George's courtship of and marriage to Isabel emphasize the traditional dilemma for would-be wives. During the courtship, the hero erects a pedestal on which to place his betrothed heroine; but after the wedding, the wife is knocked off and the husband now takes the seat of honour. When George proposes to Isabel, he is "entirely impressed with her grace and beauty, and his own inferiority" (78). As soon as he is assured of his status of husband-to-be, he increasingly occupies the position of patriarchal tyrant:

> He had ceased to regard her as a superior being, whom it was a privilege to worship . . . He even took upon himself to lecture Isabel, on sundry occasions, with regard to her love of novel-reading, her neglect of plain needlework, and her appalling ignorance about puddings. . . . All his old notions of masculine superiority returned now that he was familiar with Miss Sleaford. (90)

George initially admires Isabel's vague and dreamy replies (76). Later, when he orders wedding announcements, he is surprised at Isabel's prompt reply that she does not want her maiden name to appear on the cards. Isabel wishes to erase any mention of

her father's name "Sleaford" and answers George quite passionately concerning her wishes. For George, her emotional answers are "flights of fancy" which are not appropriate to his "training [of Isabel] with a view to his own ideal of a wife" (93). After the wedding, George continues the training of his wife. He is successful:

> Isabel loved him; she smiled at him when he spoke to her, and was gentle and obedient to his advice: he was, perhaps, a shade too fond of advising her. She had given up novel-reading, and employed her leisure in the interesting pursuit of plain needlework. (95)

Isabel learns to be an automaton, responding to George in compliance to his training. Their married life is dreary and mechanical. George is blind to Isabel's responses to him:

> Yes; she was satisfied with her life, which was the same every day, and with the dull old town, where no change ever came. She was satisfied as an opium-eater is satisfied with the common everyday world; which is only the frame that holds together all manner of splendid and ever-changing pictures. She was content with a life in which she had ample leisure to dream of a different existence. (106)

And George

> . . . was quite satisfied. He had never sought for more than this: a pretty wife to smile upon him when he came home, to brush his hat for him now and then in the passage after breakfast, before he went out for his day's work, and to walk to church twice every Sunday, hanging upon his arm (169).

Later, when married life has settled upon them, Isabel brushes the nap of his hat the wrong way, which makes him angry. He objects to the pretty flowers she brings into the house because perfumed blossoms are "liable to generate carbonic-acid gas" (229)

Even before the pair are married, Braddon sharply contrasts their world views. George pictures Isabel making tea in his late mother's Britannia-metal teapot while he sits opposite her in the tiny parlour; he fantasizes her sewing "commonplace buttons upon his commonplace shirts" (68). In contrast, the narrator, eliciting our sympathy for the unhappy Isabel, questions the wisdom of the marriage:

> Alas, poor Izzie! and are all your fancies, all the pretty stories woven out of your novels, all your long day-dreams about Marie Antoinette and Charlotte Corday, Edith Dombey and Ernest Maltravers,--all your foolish pictures of a modern Byron, fever-stricken at Missolonghi, and tended by you; a new Napoleon, exiled to St. Helena, and followed, perhaps liberated, by you,--are they all come to this? Are none of the wonderful things that happen to women ever to happen to you? Are you never to be Charlotte Corday, and die for your country? Are you never to wear ruby velvet, and diamonds in your hair, and to lure some recreant Carker to a foreign hostelry, and there heap scorn upon him? Are all the pages of life's romance to be closed upon you--you, who seem to yourself predestined, by reason of so many dreams and fancies, to such a wonderful existence? Is all the mystical fabric of your dreams to shrivel into this,--a square-built cottage at Graybridge-on-the-Wayverne, with a parish doctor for your husband? (69)

Rather than living the life of a heroine, George wants her to conform to Graybridge society:

> Nobody had ever quite understood Isabel; and least of all could George Gilbert understand the woman whom he had chosen for his wife. . . . he wanted her to be happy according to his ideas of happiness, and not her own. He wanted her to be delighted with stiff little tea parties, at which the Misses Pawlkatt, and the Misses Burdock, and young Mrs. Henry Palmer, wife of Mr. Henry Palmer, junior, solicitor, discoursed pleasantly of the newest pattern in crochet, and the last biography of some departed Evangelical curate. (103 - 104)

Clearly, the narrator sympathises with Isabel who cannot abide the "stiff little tea parties." By naming the Graybridge "ladies" after undesirable smelly animals, damaging weeds, and conniving cheats,[13] Braddon suggests that Isabel is far better off reading novels than drinking tea with them.

The disaster of their marriage is underscored by Jeffson, George's servant, who

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[13] A polecat, a name often applied to the skunk because of its strong scent, is a small brown animal of the weasel family. Because of its nasty connotations, polecat is also applied to any vile person and, in particular, to prostitutes, hardly the company George would wish for his naive wife. Burdock, sharing an equally ignominious state, is a "coarse weedy plant common on waste ground, bearing prickly flower-heads called burs." In other words, George may not want this particularly unwelcome plant to "stick" to his flower-like wife. Finally, palmer, originally referring to pilgrims returning from the holy land, has evolved into meaning a vagrant idly wandering. More damaging is the other definition of palmer to mean someone who conceals (as in the palm of the hand). Since Mrs Palmer is wife to the solicitor, Braddon most likely is referring to this last definition of cheating and conjuring. (All definitions gleaned from the *OED*.)

acts as chorus to the tragedy:

> "They wern't [sic] made for one another. I wonder sometimes to see the trouble a man 'll take before he gets a pair o' boots, to find out as they're a good fit and won't gall his foot when he comes to wear 'em; but t' same man 'll go and get married as off-hand, as if there weren't the smallest chance of his wife's not suiting him." (242)

The analogy of the boot which Jeffson uses is appropriate in that George wants to stamp out Isabel's dreams; he wants Isabel to be obedient and domestic; he wants to erase in Isabel exactly that which he found so fascinating. Braddon condemns this and suggests that George deserves the disdain Isabel later feels towards him.

> But then, if a man chooses to marry a girl because her eyes are darkly beautiful, he must be contented with the advantage he derives from the beauty for which he has chosen her. If he selects his wife from amongst other women because she is true-hearted and high-minded and trustworthy, he has ample right to be angry with her whenever she ceases to be any one of these things. (144)

Isabel has never pretended to be anything but what she is. Therefore, when later she enjoys talking to Roland about books, she is exonerated at least by the narrator and reader because she is within the bounds of her true character: the immature fantasist reading and dreaming herself as romantic heroine.

The appropriate activity for a Victorian wife is to make puddings and darn stockings. Unfortunately, as Charles Raymond observes, these skills are very much

lacking in his romantic governess (72). Isabel attempts to become a maker of pies and puddings, but, as with all her worldly attempts, she lapses into fiction, a connection made stronger by the identification with Ruth Pinch and her two men, and imagines making puddings all day long in hopes that a suitor would be enticed by the puddings' smells. But Isabel is horrified at the thought of Ruth Pinch always making puddings for Tom Pinch with no John Westlock to alleviate the boredom. To relieve her own boredom, Isabel acts "Shakspearian heroines before her looking-glass," reads her novels, and dreams her dreams (140).

Isabel's domestic dreams mimic the scene in *Madame Bovary* in which Mademoiselle Emma first greets Charles Bovary in the kitchen where she has been cooking the farm hands' breakfast; and later, after the first Madame Bovary dies, Charles observes Emma sewing by the hearth (*Madame Bovary* Part 1, Chapter II). Not only is Braddon criticizing male writers whose unrealistic heroines, such as Dickens's Ruth Pinch, patiently wait for their rescuers, but she also paints her own heroine differently. Isabel will not be bothered with the "wearisome business" of the household affairs; instead she will create her own reality where she is free to be whom she pleases, when she pleases.

George soon fades into the background of mediocrity; Isabel surpasses him and enters her next educational stage: she meets the romantic hero of the novel, Roland Lansdell, a rich squire and the poet of *The Alien's Dreams*. Roland has become the romantic hero by the end of the novel, just as Charles Glanville in *The Female Quixote* has adapted to the heroine's expectations. As Roland gains

prominence in the novel, George becomes a gastronomical entity, perhaps to reiterate his bilious dinner and his comic connection to Sancho Panza, another gourmand. He is only seen feeding (89-90)[14] especially on spring onions (167, 182) and radishes--"and, oh, how George could eat radishes, crunch, crunch, crunch!" (122).

In contrast to George's functional education, Roland has studied the classics, first under a private tutor (172), and then at Eton (129), and finally at Oxford (130). Roland's superiority to the quaint parish doctor is further accentuated in their different sartorial adornments. For instance, George wears a long watch-chain given to him by his father which he

> artfully twisted and doubled into the semblance of a short one; and on this chain he hung a lucky sixpence and an old-fashioned silver vinaigrette; which trifles, when seen from a distance, looked almost like the gold fusee-boxes which the officers stationed at Conventford wore dangling on their waistcoats (89).

In contrast, Roland wears a glimmering slender watch-chain

> of very yellow gold, with onyx cameos and antique golden coins hanging to it, --altogether different from the clumsy lockets and fusee boxes which dangled on the padded chests of the officers at Conventford, whom Isabel had once so implicitly believed in (155).

In this passage, Braddon uses the anonymous officers of Conventford as a measuring

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[14] Also see 101, 106, 122, 147, 167, 169, 182, 186, 213, 229, 232, 233, 240, 241, 256, 259, 277, 334, 337.

device because she seems to want to avoid a direct authorial comparison which would openly denigrate the hard-working doctor and elevate the lazy, wealthy landowner; such an obvious authorial comment would only antagonize a conservative segment of the hard-working Victorian middle-classes who believed that wealth (like heaven) is the reward for those who labour, physically or morally.

Most of the comparisons between George and Roland are veiled. For instance, Roland returns to Midlandshire against the wishes of his distant cousin and father-figure, Charles Raymond.[15] Roland cannot dismiss the love he feels for Isabel; escaping to foreign climes will not diminish his infatuation for the parish doctor's wife. Roland describes his extravagant love as a "disease . . . past cure." He compares it to a "foolish fever . . . . contemptible to the solemn-faced doctor who watches the wretched patient tossing and writhing, and listens to his delirious ravings" (222 - 223). The metaphor could not be more appropriate since his love (his "fever") would be "contemptible" to his lover's husband, the doctor. Ironically, the doctor, and not the patient, never recovers from the pathological fever. Braddon, however, allows Isabel to make a direct comparison between her husband, who smells of drugs, and Roland,

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[15] Braddon's fictional Midlandshire mirrors the real Warwickshire: Conventford is Coventry, Warcliffe Castle is Warwick Castle, and Graybridge-on-the-Wayverne is Stratford-upon-Avon. Literary allusions also point to this county. Midlandshire is described as a "Shakesperian region" (358) and Isabel often dreams of the mistreated heroine Amy Robsart (92), an historical figure who appears in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Kenilworth* (1821). Kenilworth, a town and castle north of Warwick and Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford, and south of Coventry is fittingly renamed Waverly, the title, but without the final "e," of Scott's first novel, which is included in Isabel's reading. The fictional river Wayverne follows a similar course to that of the Avon.

who smells of perfume (240).

Isabel is never on an equal footing with the men in her life. Like George, who had earlier placed Isabel on and then removed her from his pedestal, Isabel, in turn, places Roland Lansdell on one: "she . . . was such a degraded wretch as compared with this splendid being" (138). Isabel is in utter awe of Roland and Gwendoline, those "Beings . . . . these radiant creatures" (115, also 124). She regards Roland with such reverence that she thinks of *him*, "in italics" (179, 217). Roland is Isabel's "demigod" (138), "a shadowy and divine creature, amenable to no earthly laws. . . a modern Byron" (125). In return, Roland initially believes Isabel to be "very stupid," a "pretty nonentity" (142). Soon, however, Isabel becomes Roland's project. He wants to educate her (168-69, 263) and never loses an opportunity to make speeches for her "edification" (178). Like George, Roland is attracted to Isabel because of her difference from other women, her innocent love of such writers as Shelley and Byron; but he, too, wants to change her, to make her conform to his conceptions. Both men want Isabel to be a projection of their own desires.

In the process of educating her, Roland thinks of Isabel as an object for his amusement. She becomes his possession, just as a "waxen-looking flower in his button-hole" (155) belongs to him.[16] Although he realizes soon that "Mrs. Gilbert was not stupid, after all; she was something better than a pretty waxen image, animated by limited machinery" (144), he, like George before him, wants to educate her sensitive mind in order to raise her to his own lofty height (263).

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[16] Also see 18, 60, 184, 225.

Roland sees Isabel as a possession; but he is an extrovert, and, therefore, wants to put her on display. In contrast, Rodolphe views Emma Bovary as a possession to be kept quiet and hidden. Instead of raising her, however, Roland brings Isabel down to his lower level. This movement is transferred into various physical images. For instance, Roland takes her hand and leads her down the winding staircase of the turret as if she had been a little child: "If that slow downward journey could have lasted for ever--if she could have gone down, down, down with Roland Lansdell into some fathomless pit, until at last they came to a luminous cavern and moonlit water, where there was a heavenly calm--and death!" (189). Roland begins his "fatal descent" (222) to perdition which culminates in his last descent down a hill where Mr Sleaford, a brutal Nemesis, waits for him. Roland finally understands that he was continually moving downward: "if I had tried to mount upwards,--if I had buckled on my armour, and gone away from this castle of indolence, to fight in the ranks of my fellow-men,--I need never have met the avenger" (353 - 354). This passage also indicates Roland's adoption of Isabel's romantic inclinations. He has shed the cap and gown of the teacher and has donned the armour of the knight of romance, albeit a Christian knight, on the model of Spenser's Redcross.

Increasingly, Isabel and Roland change places. Before Roland corrupts Isabel with his knowledge, she is ignorant of any wickedness or wrong in dreaming of him as her Byronic hero (124, 138, 167). Instead of referring to sex, Isabel can safely refer to the great lovers of literature without sexual involvement (Casey 76). She can experience romantic passion through Romeo and Juliet without offending Victorian

propriety (Hughes 76). After Roland educates Isabel to see evil, he teaches her to view herself as the other Graybridge gossips do: until his death, she learns to view her actions and dreams as wicked and sinful (173, 174, 200, 211, 229, 231, 233) rather than heroic.

Like Charles Glanville in *The Female Quixote*, however, Roland is gradually transformed into a hero, who exalts and praises his mistress. As he becomes more infatuated with Isabel, he begins to think of himself as a "victim of a romantic fancy" (196), with a love newly "grown up" for a childish woman (199). He is inspired by Isabel to dream such fantasies for himself:

> Do you remember opening your eyes very wide the other day, Isabel, and crying out that you would like to see Rome, and Keats's grave, and the Colosseum,--Byron's Colosseum,--where the gladiator thought of his wife and children, eh, Izzie? I made such a dream out of that childish exclamation. (250)

As Roland is taught to dream, he places Isabel high above him. With his head bandaged from the beating he received from Isabel's father (Jack the Scribe's vengeful inscription), Roland explains that he now can see the stars which hitherto had been obscured: "What is impossible in a universe where there are such stars? It seemed as if I had never seen them until then" (347). Once Roland has learned what goodness and truth there are in Isabel, he becomes a morally better person. Ironically, the phrenologist, Charles Raymond, cannot read the altered Roland with his head bandaged. The sky, he remarks earlier to Gwendoline, is higher (344). The stars and

sky, ideological conventions, represent, for Roland, the truth. He could only see the truth, that is the stars, because he was struck on the head and laid low on the ground, an ironic reversal of the classic trope of looking at the stars and so tripping on the real ground. This satiric treatment of the Victorian discourse of "truth" emerges from Roland's desire to control and limit Isabel's imagination. He is no longer trapped in the same stifling and restricting mentality of the Graybridge folk now that he can place Isabel in an exalted position. In his death, Roland learns to break the petty bonds which kept him from seeing the world from the fresh perspective provided by Isabel:

> Our mothers believe in us, and worship us, and watch over us, and seem to fancy they have dipped us in a kind of moral Styx, and that there is something of the immortal in our common clay; but rouse our passions, and we sink to the level of the bricklayer who beats his unfaithful wife to death with a poker. They put a varnish over us at Eton and Oxford; but the matter underneath is very much the same, after all. (346)

If it is only difference in education which places the wealthier over the poorer, then education is equally the origin of the unequal positions of men and women. Isabel's last lesson, therefore, is to see Roland on her own level. In a letter dated May 1863 to Bulwer-Lytton, Braddon describes indirectly what lesson Isabel will learn from Roland:

> Happy the Amy Robsarts [in Scott's *Kenilworth*] & the Haidees [in Byron's *Don Juan*] who die before their first illusions are worn threadbare! I think the faculty of writing a love story must die out with the first death of love. We

> cease to believe in the God when we find that he is not immortal. (Braddon, "Devoted Disciple" 16)

Isabel finally removes Roland from his pedestal; his suggestion that she run away from her husband and be his mistress finally opens her eyes to his mortality, his commonness. He no longer is her demigod "now that he came down upon common ground and wooed her as an everyday creature" (251). Had he declared his intentions of building a marble mausoleum on the grounds of Mordred and had he requested Isabel to commit suicide so that both the lovers could occupy it, she would have been overjoyed and only too delighted (251), but sordid adultery is not the resolution of her Puritan English romanticism.

Unfortunately, Roland's love and Isabel's are not of the same kind. Roland views his own love as pure and above the "common world and the base thoughts of common people" (311); but when his proposal is refused, he begins to think like the "common people" he despises: he believes that Isabel refused him because she has other lovers. Roland lowers himself to the level of the Graybridge gossips, whose mythology of women reflects a common Victorian attitude. The gossips cannot accept that a woman may make a decision on her own; they cannot even give Isabel credit for discontinuing her meetings with Roland at Thurston's oak. Instead, they believe her husband used his "marital authority" to put a stop to their clandestine meetings (276). Similarly, Roland cannot accept that Isabel wishes to discontinue their meetings because she dislikes feeling wicked and not because she is having an affair with a popular clergyman (269) or with a stranger. His pure love is that of a "spoiled child

of fortune" (262); he cannot trust Isabel.

In a letter to Bulwer-Lytton, Braddon describes what she wishes to do with Roland and Isabel:

> I am so afraid of making Roland Lansdell unmanly, or ungentlemanly. I want him to be a gentleman whatever he is--but I want also to show the wide difference between a man's love & a woman's sentimental fancy, which is utterly out of the region of a man's comprehension unless he is the author of Zanoni or David Copperfield. I include Dickens though I don't think he has ever described a purely sentimental woman. I know that is a slip of the pen about the great authors in Roland's library--& yet I mean what I say. Hitherto Isabel has been reading the works of great men, but they have been all in the region of romance, &, unbalanced by graver books, they have produced the exaltation which poetry must always produce. . . . Isabel has been revelling in light & colour & music, & it is the calm gray twilight of biography & history, & philosophy that I fancy lulling that eager sentimental nature to repose. I cannot express what I mean, but I think you will understand me. ("Devoted Disciple," summer 1864, 23)

In this passage, in which Braddon expresses dissatisfaction with male authors' portrayal of women, the not-saids reveal the most. First, Braddon's fears that Roland may appear unmanly or ungentlemanly would only be an issue if she intended to bring him down or reverse his role of teacher. Second, Braddon's comments on Isabel equally shed light on her characterization. She suggests that Isabel, who has been

influenced too much by the light, colour, and music of poetry, should be "lulled" to "repose" by reading "the calm gray twilight of biography and history, and philosophy." At the same time as she suggests this metaphorical death of the heroine, she also must attempt linguistic somersaults to avoid insulting the male romance writer to whom this missive is written. Braddon, in her novel, certainly creates a dichotomy between the beauty of novels and the "gray" twilight of biography and philosophy, the geriatric reading material acceptable to the gray, dull folk of Graybridge. But the choice seems obvious: in the end, Isabel will visit "the lands she had known in the pages of Byron and Shelley" (359).

While it is necessary for Braddon to reconcile Isabel's reading with the prevailing trends of Victorian society, she does so with infusions of romance:

> Her mind expanded amongst all the beautiful things around her, and the graver thoughts engendered out of grave books banished some of her most childish fancies, her sentimental yearnings. Until now she had lived too entirely amongst poets and romancers; but now grave volumes of biography opened to her a new picture of life. She read the stories of real men and women, who had lived and suffered real sorrows, prosaic anguish, hard commonplace trial and misery. (216)

Interestingly, she exchanges the sorrows, anguish, and miseries of fictional characters in three volumes for the "real" sorrows, anguish, and miseries of "real" men and women in other narrative genres. History, as Isabel finds out in her day-school on Albany Road, has its own "romantic and horrid stories," "the Mary Stuarts, and Anne

Boleyns, the Iron Masks and la Vallières, the Marie Antoinettes and Charlotte Cordays, luckless königsmarks and wicked Borgias" (22).

The ironic effect of her switch from novels to "graver" reading of "real" people is to displace the fictional heroes: "She sat and thought of Roland Lansdell . . . . It was better than reading" (166). About this time, Isabel stops visiting the local circulating library because she is now living her own romance. Isabel creates George as a fictional character; sometimes she imagines him to be a Ravenswood, a Rochester, a Dombey, or a Rawdon Crawley (91), depending upon George's mood or particular expressions; but Roland remains Roland. She does not have to imagine him as any fictional hero because he is one: as Roland says of himself, "I have only been the hero of a story-book" (196). As a hero, Roland is, simultaneously, clearly drawn and also undescribable. Braddon provides the first glimpse of him in her favourite pre-Raphaelite style: lots of light to give translucence, a window for depth, and an androgynous human form to represent a symbolic 'other' representing both Isabel's fantasy and a separate character:

> What did she see? A young man half reclining in the deep embrasure of a window, with the summer sunshine behind him . . . . a man upon whom Nature . . . had lavished all the gifts that women most admire . . . . a kind of face . . . only familiar to us in a few old Italian portraits; a beautiful, dreamy, perfect face, exquisite alike in form and colour. The nose was midway betwixt an acquiline and a Grecian, but it was in the chiselling of the nostril, the firmness and yet delicacy of the outline . . . the forehead was of medium height

> . . . . His eyes and mouth formed the chief beauty of his face; and yet I can describe neither, for their chief charm lay in the fact that they were indescribable. (115)[17]

In this, as in other descriptions of Roland, he cannot be pictured. He is not as sharply drawn as George (1 - 2) or as Isabel (20) because he is Isabel's dream, and faces in dreams are not focussed. Isabel first meets Roland when she is looking at a Tintoretto and he is commenting on another painting at Warcliffe Castle (113).[18] Isabel is so impressed with Roland, with his melancholy "Rembrandt face" (291, 150, 155), "the wonderful face in which there was the mellow colouring of a Guido," that she makes "a picture of him in her mind" (125). Isabel, however, does not need to confine him to her imagination since the real Roland continually presents himself as a picture. "she was free to watch Roland's face . . . that profile whose perfect outline grew more and more distinct against the moonlit sky. If anybody could have painted him . . . what a picture it would have made!" (187 - 188). Because he is so often associated

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[17] It is interesting to compare Roland in other, similar picturesque poses. "Roland sat to-day in the great window of the library--a deeply-embayed Tudor window, jutting out upon a broad stone terrace, along whose balustrade a peacock stalked slowly in the sunshine" (149 - 50). Although Roland cannot be pictured, he is associated with beauty in conjunction with the peacock, appropriately, also emblematic of vanity.

[18] A Tintoretto does hang in the Gilt Room of Warwick Castle. Tintoretto painted a Henry Catharine Davillo (Arrigo Caterino Davilo in *Biographical Dictionary and Synopsis of Books Antient and Modern*), who, after an honourable service in the French Army and a less than inspiring writing career, died from a pistol shot (*An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town and Castle of Warwick* 189). If we can safely assume that Braddon's Warcliffe Castle is modelled on Warwick (refer to footnote 14), then even the paintings' subjects, based on historical personages, correspond to Isabel's reading of heroes dying violently and suddenly.

with paintings and with such intangibles as light, Roland tends to register as a figment of Isabel's prodigious imagination. By the end of the novel, although he had always lived an "artificial kind of existence" (133), Roland will only exist as another portrait among the equally youthful portraits of his short-lived ancestors in the gallery at Mordred Priory (129, 268, 291, 351).[19] In contrast to Isabel's fondness for art and the beautiful (101, 103, 146, 156), and Roland's artistic possessions, George lives a drab, utilitarian existence (102, 103), devoid of anything that is not functional. Not surprisingly, George is not enthusiastic about the pictures hanging in Roland's mansion (156).

Isabel's view of Roland as a picture is only a small segment of the replication operation that *The Doctor's Wife* supports. This mirroring process imitates the parody produced in *Don Quixote*, a novel that also examines the influences of fiction on a reader. Don Quixote's world is full of writers, poets, books, and translated manuscripts.[20] Isabel's world is equally populated: the novel introduces other novels; the heroine reads about other heroines; and heroes conclude as "heroes" despite their

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[19] Roland, a romantic figure, lives in an equally romantically named hall. Modred is both the evil nephew and illegitimate son to King Arthur. In Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, Modred, like Roland with Isabel, attempts to seduce Guinevere when her husband is in France on a military campaign. Arthur, upon hearing the news, returns and both men are killed in the ensuing battle, and she becomes a nun. Guinevere, like Isabel, is left alone with neither husband nor lover. Ironically, Roland's ancestral home, Mordred Priory, was once a monastery.

[20] See Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: the Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre*, and Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: the Metafictional Paradox*, for a discussion of the novel / romance as mirror of itself.

disbelief in romantic fictions. The first of these reproductions is Braddon's own double, the sensational writer, Sigismund Smith, who models all his good, dark heroines on Isabel (25). She, in turn, reads his penny dreadfuls in which she is the heroine. In other words, she reads a mirror of herself, a picture representing Smith's idea of Isabel, perhaps a not too accurate copy of the real. The (re)production of heroines becomes complicated when Smith also suggests that the real Isabel is a reflection of the heroine in Balzac's "The Girl with the Golden Eyes" (25), which association links, in a distorted manner, the insignificant hack writer with the French master.

The text shifts, however, from Sigismund's productions to Isabel's. Isabel, the text implies, must take back her (re)productions. In a series of reproductions, Isabel recreates / reproduces herself as object; but, since she is conscious of her role as heroine, she ultimately produces herself as an aware subject. Initially, she, like Arabella in *The Female Quixote*, accepts the male gaze as a confirmation of her status as heroine (77-78); but she soon finds this limits her own productions. Therefore, Isabel increasingly turns to the mirror, the self-gaze, to reflect her attractiveness (96, 111, 139, 201) and her desire to perform as actress/heroine (65, 125, 139).[21] The mirror becomes an extension of her novel-reading. She looks to the mirror to compare

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[21] Braddon herself was briefly an actress, under the pseudonym Mary Seyton, in the late 1850s before she embarked on her writing career (Wolff 45-46). Throughout her life, she maintained strong ties to the theatre and to theatrical people (Wolff 54). She wrote and produced two plays (*Griselda* in 1873 and *Genevieve; or, the Missing Witness* in 1874) and also returned to the stage in 1876 in a revival of a role she played in the 1850s (Wolff 237-238). Her son Gerald, following in her footsteps, also became an actor (Wolff 321, 327-328).

her own image to those she creates in her day-dreams (139) and the mirror does verify that her "dream had come true at last. This was romance--this was life" (125).

The mirror not only doubles Isabel but it also doubles heroines. Gwendoline, the shadow heroine, was once a beauty and had her visage reproduced in "books of beauty" and "West-end print-shops" (133). But now seeing her beauty faded in the looking glass, she feels "that the story of her life was ended" (136). Isabel, the main heroine, also comments that "her life was finished" when looking in her mirror (204). Isabel and Gwendoline appear to be mirror doubles: the same but opposite. Isabel, born in obscurity, marries the boring man but dreams of the exciting one. In contrast, Gwendoline, born to the aristocracy, drops the boring, languid suitor for the more ambitious one (130-32); but, like Isabel, she also dreams of the man not taken (133). Isabel looks longer at Gwendoline than at Roland because "in this elegant being she saw the image of herself" (116). As Isabel has already acknowledged, the golden-haired Gwendoline finally recognises her affinity to her black-haired rival. When both women, standing on either side of a glass of a different make, the window, recognise each other (236), a chain of similarities and sympathies is unleashed. Gwendoline, while admonishing Isabel for her behaviour and warning her of the gossips tossing her name about the village, recalls her own humiliation and experience under the gossips' scrutinizing eyes (238). In this confrontation scene, the two demonstrate their similarities through their differences: both are wrong in their view of Roland's love for Isabel (239).

Gwendoline, more worldly, exposes Isabel's sexuality without implicating the

innocent heroine. When Isabel naively suggests their love is pure and noble, the seam in the Victorian notion of sexuality becomes visible. The woman's position in sexual relations exists in a double bind, a contradiction: she must remain ignorant of her own sexuality while demonstrating an awareness of it. Gwendoline, further removed from the marriage market, can suggest the impropriety of their rendezvous; whereas, Isabel, heroine and youthful bride, therefore not on the market, cannot. Instead, Isabel can express her sexuality in her references to other heroines, whose sexual identity she can assume without damaging her status as heroine of her own story. In this context, it is not surprising that Isabel dreams of Edith Dombey, a *femme fatale*, the most.[22] Similarly for the male lover of choice, Isabel refers to *l'homme fatal*, Byron. Byron, the 'bad boy' even in his own lifetime, claimed to have made love to over two hundred women, a fiction favourable to him but damaging to the women.

Isabel not only recreates fictional / historical characters, she also reproduces the novel's characters to resemble those in her own dreams. The reader often views the other characters through Isabel's eyes rather than the narrator's. For instance, Isabel, already seeing Roland as a painting, always associates him with light, perhaps because light is a main ingredient in Pre-Raphaelite painting, and must be present before any painting can be seen. In Isabel's dreams, Roland occupies "bright regions" (139), provides a "sunshiny pause in the business of life" (175), and his "dark face [shines] dazzling and beautiful" (138); Roland is "pleased to let in the light of positive

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[22] For references to Edith Dombey, see 69, 79, 87, 91, 95, 139, 143, 167, 171, 178, 230, 319; for Byron, see 24, 69, 90, 91, 119, 120, 123, 135, 141, 143, 150, 178, 199, 250, 262, 359.

knowledge on her vague ideas" (168 - 169), and his face brightens when he sees Isabel (174); when Isabel looks upon her hero, Roland is reflected as "the golden light in her eyes" which "was lovelier than anything out of a fairy tale" (178). Isabel's life has been brightened by Roland as by a glimpse of the sun. But when she thinks of her necessary separation from her bright sun, she sees the "dull and colourless" life which lay before her (244). Isabel compares the time she spent with George, the "grey, colourless pause in her life," with the time spent with Roland, the "tropical splendour . . . a lovely oasis of light and colour" (336). Similarly, Gwendoline, who also loves Roland, is robbed of the "few rays of that light which was now the only radiance upon earth for her,--the light of her cousin's presence," by the passive and unknowing Isabel (136).

Roland's identification with Isabel's romanticized world provides the locus for female bonding and for the manifestation of violence, a crucial psychological projection for female aggression. Romanticized Roland becomes the initial, romantic site for female attachment. Both Isabel and Gwendoline, whose interaction with one another stems from Roland, find they can return to their dreams and imagination without him or his romantic guide, *The Alien's Dreams*. Isabel's last stage of her development is a return to her own romantic dreams; her bonding with Gwendoline Pomphrey, a female friend, replaces the two inadequate lovers. The two women (and Gwendoline's father, the inconsequential earl) visit "those fair foreign lands for which she had pined in the weedy garden at Camberwell" (358). The lands that were known to her only through the pages of Byron and Shelley now become familiar (359). In

the end, Isabel is found to have always already known the truth: "Her dreams were all true, then; there were such places as this, and people lived in them" (112).

After the recognition scene between the two heroines, the text no longer needs a hero to provide this function. Roland's violent death and George's lingering illness provide the means whereby Isabel will demonstrate she is a heroine. Her ceaseless care of her husband points to her compassion and redeems her from imputations of infidelity. Her father's extortion and violence, an interesting blend of the fairy tale topos of the ineffectual father and the destructive dragon, suggest that Isabel has always been on the verge of being a heroine, who undergoes similar trials. Both George's and Roland's deaths are cathartic, freeing her from their restrictive tutelage. She can now pursue her imagination beyond the boundaries of Graybridge.

Isabel's sensational world of fiction becomes the reality of Braddon's novel. Isabel is a heroine of three volumes, and it is her perception of the world that now takes over. She can provide a "liberal education" to her half-brothers (359) and a schoolhouse, "a substantial modern building, set in an old-world garden, where there are great gnarled pear-trees" (360). If Isabel can interpret the world through reading romantic and sensational fiction in a way that is correct and applicable, then, Braddon seems to say, there is some credibility to sensational novels such as *The Doctor's Wife*. Braddon, through her misunderstood heroine, vindicates that "bitter term of reproach, 'sensation'" (7). And in vindicating the sensational school of fiction, predominantly written by women, she also exalts female authorship, and the right of women to their own realities and their own independence from the patriarchal fictions of what women

must be

Chapter Four

Rewriting the Romance in *Jane Eyre*

"Do not speak slightingly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days. . . . The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means. . . . The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid."

Miss Prism in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Act II

Jane Eyre, introduced to the public on 16 October 1847, met with applause and admiration: readers could not put down Currer Bell's first published novel. George Murray Smith, Charlotte Brontë's publisher of Smith, Elder & Co. "devoured" *Jane Eyre* on a Sunday, cancelling an afternoon engagement in the process (Gérin 338). One of the first readers to comment on *Jane Eyre* was Thackeray, already a well-known author who was himself in the midst of writing his serialized *Vanity Fair*. In his letter of acknowledgement (23 October 1847) to Brontë's publishers, he explains one of the attractions of the novel: "I wish you had not sent me Jane Eyre. It interested me so much that I have lost (or won if you like) a whole day in reading it at the busiest period, with the printers I know waiting for copy. . . . It is a fine book . The plot of the story is one with which I am familiar" (Thackeray, vol. III, 318-19). Thackeray articulates what has intrigued readers of this romance since its publication: *Jane Eyre* tells the familiar story we want to call our own, the successful maturation of the rebellious and unloved orphan who finds love and wealth at the end. Yet this romance also tells the story of an orphan-governess who refuses the traditional plots offered her. The plot, a culmination of experiences which define her identity, she will

eventually write will be her own unique tale. While the orphan Jane will adopt and rewrite the plots she reads, others--the Reeds, Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St John Rivers--will attempt to offer her restricting plots.[1] In order to maintain her unique identity, she must resist the traps of these subservient plots. If she does succumb to their vision of who she should be, her identity will clearly be erased; her own singular plot will, therefore, not be written. Jane's defiance towards these proffered plots and her subsequent survival are also played out in her resistance to the plots she reads. While Brontë, with the utmost economy, wove into the life story of a reader of fantasy the elements from other stories, other tales familiar to her readers, she was able to show her heroine accepting but also rejecting prescribed roles for women. Jane reads from Bewick's *History of British Birds*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Richardson's *Pamela*, fairy tales, mythologies, and *The Arabian Nights*,[2] to name a few. That Jane Rochester's autobiography intertextualizes her own plot with plots from the younger Jane's reading is what intrigues Thackeray. Yet, while Jane Rochester, the narrator, incorporates various tales into her life story, she also ruptures and rewrites the original fables enough to generate her own unique self-production

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[1] See Lyndall Gordon 146-7, Carla Peterson 105, Margaret Lenta 35, and Jean Wyatt 25.

[2] *The Arabian Nights* Jane mentions here and later when she returns to Gateshead to witness Mrs Reed's death may refer to two separate collections of Arabian tales. *The Thousand and One Nights* was first translated into English from Galland's French collection in 1706-8 (*Tales from the Thousand and One Nights* 9). Winifred Gérin suspects that the Brontës would have been familiar with this edition (Gérin 26). In addition, *Tales of the Genii*, published in 1764, appears to have influenced Brontë, especially in her juvenilia (Gérin 27).

without disrupting the recognizable, traditional plot Thackeray finds so familiar.

Like Thackeray, we soon identify threads from previous tales. We become suspicious that Jane's life is an intersection of plots and stories after she protests that she is "merely telling the truth" (Vol. 1, Ch. 12, P. 109). She also cautions her reader about the role other stories play in retelling her life: "In those days I was young, and all sorts of fancies bright and dark tenanted my mind: the memories of nursery stories were there amongst other rubbish; and when they recurred, maturing youth added to them a vigour and vividness beyond what childhood could give" (1.12.113). Jane's narrative inconsistencies[3] are not only a signal that the narrator, Jane Rochester, is unreliable but also that the text, her autobiography, is a construction. We must read Jane's story, as Thackeray has already suggested, as an echo of other plots from other stories.

Jane borrows heavily from earlier texts and stories, first to educate herself by learning the vocabulary needed to understand her world and, second, to allow expression, albeit from another pen, of the smouldering passion she has had to repress. For Jane, "the word *book* acted as a transient stimulus" (1.3.21); books provide her with pleasure.

In the definitive opening incident in the novel, Jane describes her first happy

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[3] Despite our initial trust, Jane Rochester does insert some inconsistencies into her story to force us to question her veracity as narrator for her life. For example, Jane often "thought [Rochester's] smile was such a sultan might . . . bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched." Although Jane only thinks this and never verbalizes her view of her "master," he responds as if she had: "I would not exchange this one little English girl for the grand Turk's whole seraglio" (2.9.271).

experience with a book. After the previous scene in which, like Cinderella, Jane is banished from the family hearth, she finds comfort and contentment reading Bewick's *History of British Birds* safe "in the window-seat . . . . shrined in double retirement" (1.1.8). Here, while the alienated heroine is mentally and physically isolated and secluded, John Reed, her bully cousin, abruptly ruptures Jane's solitude and harangues her for hiding behind the red moreen curtain and for reading what he considers his books (1.1.9-11). This episode is repeated in various guises throughout her journey towards her final identity as Jane Rochester, who with Rochester at the secluded Ferndean finally suffers "no harassing restraint, no repressing of glee and vivacity . . . . for with him I was at perfect ease" (3.11.442).

Echoed in countless scenes, the window-seat and the curtain will conceal Jane from prying eyes while framing her observation of her world.[4] The red moreen curtain separates Jane's imaginary and desirable world of fiction from the real and repressed world. As a married woman, Jane will write the story of her observations from the window-seat, but she will frame them within the context of her reading. This elder Jane, through her early reading, can relive these desires and fantasies, passing them on to the next generation of repressed readers. Like the Lady of Shalott (1832) who sees her world not directly from her window but from her mirror, Jane sitting near her own window observes her world through another mirror, the books she reads.

These books either reflect her own oppressed situation or unleash her own

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[4] See for instance 1.1.7, 1.4.30, 1.4.36, 1.6.55, 1.7.61-2, 1.10.85-6, 1.13.120, 2.2.172, 2.2.176, 2.3.191, 2.5.209, 2.6.235, 2.9.274, 3.2.336-7, 3.11.452.

desires. Hitting Jane as punishment for hiding behind the curtain with the book she has just been reading, John Reed, whose violence against her reading belies his name, releases her passions. Like many young women in the nineteenth century, Jane soon learns that any excessive articulation must be restricted, silenced, and controlled. Her outburst against John's tyranny requires her to "be tied down" with Abbot's garters and locked in the sexually or theologically suggestive "red room." When Jane promises not to "stir," this ignominious punishment is relaxed (1.1.12). For only through "perfect submission and stillness" will Jane be liberated (1.2.18). Scenes like John's attack and Jane's subsequent lashing out and punishment will be played out again and again before she finally wins the right to live according to her own script. John Reed, the first of a long line of repressive men, tries to force Jane into a plot of his own devising. Jane refuses to be drawn out from behind her curtain where she quietly rewrites the scripts she is provided with. At the end, she has exchanged the solitary window-seat for another retirement from society: one of her own choosing.

While Jane's reading allows her to express desire,[5] it also helps her come to know who she is, an obvious problem for an orphan without an identity. As Jane's "gentle readers," we have no problem identifying ourselves with this poor, hapless heroine who, like us, also reads. Within the first few pages, Jane's reading defines

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[5] Jane obviates the guilt of expressing any desire by removing her agency. She attributes her desire to other forces. When she returns to Thornfield from her visit to Gateshead, she feels obligated to explain that "an impulse held me fast,--a force turned me round: I said--or something in me said for me, and in spite of me . . ." (2.7.248). Later, when she is on the verge of expressing her love for Rochester, she "involuntarily . . . and with as little sanction of free will" breaks down and cries, a new articulation of, until now, her silenced emotions (2.8.254).

her, for us at least, as the heroine, the girl-woman to watch. She is both producer and product, subject and object. Women's lives, perhaps to indicate their ornamental or artificial position in society, are described, in *Jane Eyre*, in terms of fiction. Georgiana's life is a volume from a "novel of fashionable life" (2.6.236) whereas Jane's could be a "delightful romance" (3.6.373). While St John reads her face like a page (3.4.359), Jane reads her past and future as pages from her life book, filled with religious warning (3.1.325; also see 2.9.271).

Jane's identity is clearly as writer and reader, creator and creation. She is not only the voice that speaks to us but also the subject of which she speaks. During the course of her journey, she confronts other voices advocating other identities for her. In referring to *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment* that she reads at Gateshead (1.4.38), she can incorporate into her own text the confusing and conflicting voices she hears from other characters as well as from other literary texts. From these voices, she tries on various guises in an attempt to find her own voice and identity. The correlation between Scheherazade telling stories to her sister Dinarzade and Jane telling her own story to us, her "gentle" readers, is direct and immediate. Jane also tells her story to St John Rivers, an English Schahriah. Marriage to St John would be as dangerous as Scheherazade's marriage was to Schahriah, the sultan who has his wives strangled every morning. Jane imagines her future as St John's wife: "at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked--forced to keep the fire of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital--this would be unendurable" (3.10.433).

Unlike Scheherazade, who finds a voice in her marriage, Jane would be silenced by marriage to her cousin. Jane also often compares Rochester to a sultan whose mistresses are his slaves in his seraglio. After Rochester is found to have a legal wife already, he suggests that Jane be his mistress, one of the Grand Turk's concubines, instead of his wife, a role for Jane as unequal as marriage to St John.

Jane begins her history to St John with her birth and her parentage (3.3.352). He, in turn, reads Jane's face "as if its features and lines were characters on a page" (3.4.359, 360).[6] Her telling of her story to St John mirrors her telling it to her gentle readers. Her book, in other words, becomes the signification of her life. In words rebelling against the narrowly austere Christianity of a Brocklehurst and a St John, and sympathizing with a wife and the restrictions imposed on restless women like Bertha, the governess Jane describes the restlessness that is in her nature:

> Then my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story, backwards and forwards, . . . to let my heart be heaved by the exultant movement which, while it swelled it in trouble, expanded it with life . . . a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all of incident, life, fire, feeling that I desired and had not in my actual existence.

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[6] Pauline Nestor in *Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre* describes the power of scrutiny between Jane and other antagonists. She provides examples in which the controlling gazes are described in combative terms (see *Eyre* 1.4.36, 1.7.66, 1.7.68). The visual contest between Jane and Rochester is sexual in description. His eyes are invasive, "piercing," "penetrating," and seem "to dive into" Jane's (1.14.134). In return, Jane's gaze possesses the power to hurt: "With that searching and yet faithful and generous look, you torture!" (2.8.258). Ultimately, Jane wins the contest over Rochester when he is blinded. (See Nestor 88.)

(1.12.110)

To St John, however, Jane prefers to remain anonymous, repressing her real name as well as her passionate nature. St John, like Schahriah, who overhears Scheherazade's stories and wants to hear more, is an interested reader of and listener to Jane's partial history. He claims the identification as the sultan, a comparison forcing Jane into the role of circumscribed wife: "I have experienced the excitement of a person to whom a tale has been half-told, and who is impatient to hear the sequel" (3.7.382). But St John takes it upon himself to tell Jane her story. He converts her "into a listener" to "the sequel of a tale" (3.7.384, 383), which he insists on finishing (3.7.384, 385). Jane's writing of her real name unconsciously on a picture she drew begins the tale for St John; he produces the same piece of paper with her name on it as the conclusion to "his" story. However, Jane, as narrator, ends her own story not with St John but with Rochester, the sultan whose heart she wins: "You shall not get it out of me to-night, sir; you must wait till tomorrow; to leave my tale half told, will, you know, be a sort of security that I shall appear at your breakfast-table to finish it" (3.11.443). The conclusion to *Jane Eyre* provides a number of closing words. Jane quotes St John's farewell letter where he inscribes the words, in Revelations, from Saint John the Divine who quotes Jesus Christ (see Revelations 22: 12-21). Concluding with the words from Revelations, the ingenious autobiographer gives her ending an "apocalyptic" note.

Jane's autobiography is her self-production in which she can parade through various fictions before she reaches her own creation of Jane Rochester, wife and

mother as well as reader, writer, and heroine. One such role Jane undertakes is suggested by her reading of *The Arabian Nights*. She will become the underdog who survives on her wits. In other words, she will be the trickster who feigns socially acceptable behavour in order to avoid unpleasant consequences. She suggests she can fill the role of the poor beggar, Schacabac, whose wits help feed him, in one of the stories Scheherazade tells. A Barmacide prince prepares a banquet of empty dishes as a jest to the starving Schacabac. Schacabac plays the game and feigns drunkenness, later used as a defence, to knock the prince down. Subsequently, the prince orders a real feast to be served, thereby rewarding the trickster. At Lowood, Jane must also feign satiety since the princely Brocklehurst feasts the schoolgirls on very little. Instead, Jane relies on her fancy to satisfy her hunger with imaginary hot roast potatoes with white bread and new milk (1.8.75). After running away from Rochester, Jane again becomes the starving beggar, Schacabac. Unlike Brocklehurst, however, the Rivers siblings feed her with real bread and milk. This time the orphan's hunger is metaphysical; she needs to feed on books which the well-read Rivers can supply: she "devoured the books" they lend her (3.4.355).

The first book in the history of Jane's reading is one primarily devoted to pictures. Sitting "cross-legged, like a Turk," the young Jane is not reading some exotic, foreign text (like *The Arabian Nights*), but Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds* (1.1.8). According to Marcelle Thiébaux, "Bewick's *British Birds* offers . . both Brontë and Jane the sourcebook of her own life's sketchbook, the landscape of her wanderings, its principal personages metamorphoses of air, water, rock, and birds"

(51). The Reeds and Rivers (water), Rochester (rocks), and Jane (air) are Bewick's landscapes incarnate. Moreover, the imagery of birds weaves a web throughout her world in which they are used to describe Jane (2.8.256), her heart (3.2.328), faithfulness and love (3.1.326), as well as Rochester (2.9.275, 3.11.436, 3.11.444).[7]

The sections from which she quotes, the Introduction to Volume II, pertaining to water birds, indicates a fascination with the solemn, the dreary, even the morbid. She dwells on passages describing "bleak shores" surrounding "naked, melancholy isles" and "forlorn regions" (1.1.8; Bewick 2.109, 2.128, 2.171, 2.180, 2.234). The pictures which interest her are not the attractive wood engravings of birds introducing each description, but rather the unusual and eerie tail-pieces. She sees rocks "alone in a sea of billow and spray," a "broken boat stranded on a desolate coast," and "the cold and ghastly moon glancing through bars of cloud at a wreck just sinking" (1.1.8, 9; Bewick 2.196; also see Appendix 1, Figures 13-15). Having already opened Bewick's *British Birds*, Jane would also have noticed other macabre scenes, such as a man vomiting (Bewick 1.10, 2.202; see Appendix 1, Figures 11 and 12); a young man hanging by the neck from a tree (Bewick 1.57; see Appendix 1, Figure 16); a bird of prey attacking a lamb (1.2; see Appendix 1, Figure 4); children cruelly teasing a homeless dog (1.135; see Appendix 1, Figure 6); tombstones, such as the one on the title page of Volume I (Bewick 2.355); and, most important for Jane's reading, the strange ghoulish creatures seen attacking youths or dancing in the forest (Bewick 1.45,

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[7] For images of Jane as a bird, see 2.9.262, 2.9.275, 3.1.317, 3.3.353, 3.11.441, 3.11.444. Also see 1.4.30, 1.8.75, 1.11.107, 1.14.140, 2.2.173, 2.2.178, 2.5.209, 2.5.212, 2.5.217, 2.5.219, 2.5.220, 2.5.221, 2.8.254, 3.2.329, 3.2.332, 3.5.364.

1.99, 1.183, 2.340; see Appendix 1, Figures 1-3).[8] (Refer to Appendix 1 for more of Bewick's intriguing woodcuts.)

Like most of Jane's early reading, Bewick's *Birds* figures prominently in her later life. Images from Bewick float about the chapters, resurfacing at key moments, perhaps indicative that her life is indeed art. When we are first introduced to Bewick's woodcuts, Jane explains that "each picture told a story" (1.1.9).[9] Later, the governess Jane, in describing the watercolours she shows to Rochester, encourages her readers to see a story:

> The first represented clouds low and livid, rolling over a swollen sea: all the distance was in eclipse; so, too, was the foreground; or rather, the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked

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[8] Jane's description of the "fiend pinning down the thief's pack behind him" which to the young Jane is "an object of terror" (*Eyre* 1.1.9) is reproduced from Bewick in Appendix 1, Figure 1.

[9] During the mid to late 1840s, a number of critics and artists were developing the idea that art, in particular painting, should tell a story, often in a domestic setting. Ruskin, in Volume 1 of his *Modern Painters* (1843), defended and promoted Turner, advocating the symbolic meaning behind his large and expressive paintings: "We are not to approach [art] to be pleased, but to be taught; not to form a judgement, but to receive a lesson" (Ruskin 180). This theory was later picked up by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, of whom Holman Hunt used symbolic realism as his trademark. Interestingly, Turner borrowed much of his style from John Martin (1789-1854), a painter much admired and copied by the Brontë siblings (see both Gérin's chapter "The Burning Clime" and Julian Treuherz, *Victorian Painting*, 57-58, 78). Charlotte Brontë, familiar with Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, wrote to a friend about her experience reading Volume 1: "Hitherto I have only had instinct to guide me in judging art; I feel now as if I had been walking blindfold--this book seems to give me eyes" (qtd in "introduction," Ruskin, xvii).

> with foam; its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems . . . . Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn. (1.13.126)

The story here, while it also borrows images of jewellery and gold from *Arabian Nights*, underlines Jane's split between her life behind the curtain and her life in public, her suppressed desires and her observed duties, her passionate thoughts and her quiet demeanour, her personal reading and her public teaching. While the bird just sits, aware of the wreck around it, a corpse sinks below the surface, beyond hope or salvation.[10] While the green water prevents the viewer from clearly seeing the face of the corpse, from below her still eyes "glanced" through the watery curtain separating the living and the hopeful from the dead and the hopeless. Later, Jane conjures up another corpse when all her desires for happiness are dashed against the rocks of resignation: "My hopes were all dead . . . . I looked on my cherished wishes, yesterday so blooming and glowing; they lay stark, chill, livid--corpses that could

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[10] In the water bird section of Bewick's *Birds*, the Great Black Cormorant is given literary prominence: "Milton seems to have put the finishing hand to it, by making Satan personate the Cormorant, while he surveys, undelighted, the beauties of Paradise" (Bewick 384). This happens just before he tempts Eve:

> "So clomb this grand thief into God's fold:
>
> . . .
>
> Thence up he flew, and on the Tree of Life,
> The middle tree and highest there that grew,
> Sat like a cormorant; yet not true life
> Thereby regained, but sat devising death
> To them who lived . . . " (*P.L.* IV.192-198)

never revive" (2.11.298).

Not surprisingly, Rochester understatedly claims that these drawings are "peculiar" for a school girl (1.13.127), but not for someone who reflects back or identifies with the world of books. In imitating Bewick, she can only make copies of copies, for the original, the sea, she has never seen in her limited travels.[11] Rochester is so moved by her drawings that, after he queries where she had ever seen Latmos ("for that is Latmos" he says), he "abruptly" puts away her pictures and dismisses her immediately (1.13.128). Somewhere below the surface, Rochester represses some emotion engendered by her pictures. It is this continuous tension between two worlds, born from Jane's reading and represented in her art and later in her contrasting relationships with Rochester and St John, that informs her 'autobiography'. For her autobiography will map out her journey, following her own route somewhere between the excesses of a Rochester and the repressiveness of a St John.

Bewick's impish and ghoulish contribution becomes amalgamated and melts into the images Jane introduces from her other reading and understanding of fairy stories and the exotic, primarily from *The Arabian Nights*. The fantastic pervades Jane's narrative and her sense of self, influenced by Bewick's *Birds*, Bessie's stories of the macabre, and *The Arabian Nights*. At Gateshead she sees herself in the looking-glass as half imp and half fairy (1.2.14). She does not know who or what she is. Often, she is "rather *out* of" herself (1.2.12), "like nobody" else at Gateshead (1.2.15).

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[11] Also compare the similarities between her pencil drawing executed at Gateshead on her return visit and images from Bewick. Jane always emphasizes her imagination, her mind, over the merely imitative.

Later, at Thornfield Hall, she undergoes a similar out-of-body detachment when she looks in the mirror. This time she identifies with the lunatic Bertha Rochester whom she describes as a "Vampyre" (2.10.286). Jane's experiences with the looking-glasses reflect her view of herself: Out of herself, she looks into the mirror, like the Lady of Shalott, seeing what others see (La Belle 53, 54).

The way others see the young Jane mimics her own view of herself. The older Jane, in writing her story, casts others into echoing her reading. Not only does John Reed characterize his young cousin as an animal, at a time when she too sees herself as non-human, but the entire Reed household sees her as a "mad cat" (1.2.12), a "rat" (1.1.11), a "bad animal" (1.1.9), a "little toad" (1.3.26), or a "fiend" (1.4.27). The Reeds, by restricting her reading and removing her cherished book, wish to define the young dependent. Like her son, Mrs Reed denies Jane her identity when she writes to Mr John Eyre that "Jane Eyre is dead" (2.6.241). And Jane herself when she returns to Gateshead years later cannot identify herself to the old dying woman: "I said nothing . . . afraid of occasioning some shock by declaring my identity" (2.6.240).

After the young Jane is removed from Gateshead and is placed under Miss Temple's guidance at Lowood, she learns "the first two tenses of the verb *Etre*," to be. She will attempt, through her reading, to negotiate her being. At Thornfield Jane must redefine herself under restricted terms: Rochester locks up most of his books behind glass doors, teasing Jane with what she cannot have. As a governess, she supposes her employer thinks that elementary works, light literature, poetry, biography, travels, and a few romances are sufficient for her private perusal (1.11.104). Later, Rochester,

in contrast to John Reed, identifies Jane on a higher plane as a "fairy," a "witch," and an "elf" (1.13.127).[12] While the writer, Jane, allows Rochester to continue calling her "fairy," she requires the younger Jane to view herself "faithfully" as a "Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain" (2.1.163).[13] Later Jane argues with Rochester that she is not a beauty but rather a "plain, Quakerish governess" (2.9.261). When he wants to see her as his angel, she laughingly objects, "I am not an angel" (2.9.262). After Jane has survived her near-sacrifice at the altar, she reflects that she does not know herself: "where was the Jane Eyre of yesterday?" (2.11.298). Later, when she is rescued by the Rivers, she identifies herself by the pseudonym Jane Elliott. Her control over her identity allows her to begin "at once to know [her]self" (3.2.342). St John, the apex of control, does not need to lock up his books in a cupboard with glass (3.3.349), for seeing himself as god (3.8.406), he will manipulate her in other ways. He will attempt to create Jane in his own image: "God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife . . . you are formed for labour, not for love . . . . I claim you--not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service" (3.8.407). St John believes he is the mirror

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[12] Also see 1.15.150, 2.9.270, 2.9.273, 2.9.276, 2.10.283, 3.1.317, 3.11.441, 3.11.443.

[13] Charlotte Brontë's own view of herself, inspired by her own reading and her and her siblings' creation of Glass Town, was demolished by her Roe Head school friend, Mary Taylor, who told Charlotte that she found her "downright ugly," a criticism with the effect on super-sensitive Charlotte like "a pail of ice-water on an arctic morning." To Mary's apologies later, Charlotte replied simply, "You did me a great deal of good, Polly, so don't repent it" (Gérin 57; also compare to Gordon 44). Interestingly, Charlotte's own heroine does not need the tonic of reality provided by her friends. By the end of the novel's second paragraph, Jane tells us that she is conscious of her "physical inferiority" (1.1.7).

for Jane.

From "Cinderella," she constructs her own identity within her own plot: the rags-to-riches story of Cinderella/Jane Eyre who, despite the machinations of the evil step-mother/Mrs Reed and her two lazy step-sisters/cousins, will marry the wealthy prince/Rochester. Although fairy stories for girls perpetuate the myth that a girl's highest calling is to be acquiescent with domestic virtues while waiting for her Prince to rescue and marry her, the far from acquiescing Jane both adheres to and rejects the fairy-tale romance (Rowe, K. 70). A number of critics have noticed this quiet rebellion in Jane's journey to becoming Mrs Rochester.[14] Jane experiments between male and female fantasies, rejecting both as inadequate and too simplistic for her story. She does, however, subvert the tales in order to fit them into her own emerging concept of herself.

Jane meanders between female and male fantasies, revealing her wavering between rebellious independence, depicted in the more aggressive male fantasies, and a submission to fate, depicted in the passive female fantasies. Karen Rowe persuasively argues that the apothecary, Mr Lloyd, with his curative powers, "inaugurates Jane into an alternative mode of self-discovery and freedom, one associated with masculine

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[14] Jenijoy La Belle, in "Mutiny Against the Mirror: *Jane Eyre* and *The Mill on the Floss*," argues that the revolt, in Victorian literature, against images in the mirror plays an important role in female self-conception. Karen Rowe, in "'Fairy-born and human-bred': Jane Eyre's Education in Romance," points out that Jane, who initially follows the folk-lore pattern, must reject this simplistic paradigm because it subverts woman's equality and independence. Marcelle Thiébaux, in "Foucault's Fantasia for Feminists: The Woman Reading," explores the process of rupture, redirection, and incorporation of the text by women readers. Margaret Lenta, in "Jane Fairfax and Jane Eyre: Educating Women," acknowledges Jane's rejection of a series of identities.

models" (Rowe 74). Although, after his visit, Jane requests *Gulliver's Travels* from the library, she still wavers between female and male fantasy, for the overall plot of *Jane Eyre* echoes, for instance, that of "Cinderella" or *Pamela*. The male fantasy appears subsumed within the female.[15]

In Goldsmith's stories of Rome's political leaders, for our purposes a male fantasy, she finds no sympathy. Her reading of Goldsmith, his *The Roman History* (1769), introduces her to a world full of ambitious, profligate men and lascivious concubines: "I had read Goldsmith's History of Rome, and had formed my opinion of Nero, Caligula" (1.1.11). Between their political murders and their licentiousness, little Jane finds no masculine models to revere. She, however, draws on her reading of the insane Caligula, who had a habit of murdering most of his relatives and torturing others while he dined, and Nero, who dispatched his mother, wife, and mistresses, to articulate her anger against John Reed who has just disrupted her reading. She uses these mad and ambitious men of power to identify John, not Jane: "'wicked and cruel boy! . . . . You are like a murderer--you are like a slave-driver--you are like the Roman emperors!'" (1.1.11). In identifying Nero, in particular, with John Reed, Jane anticipates her cousin's eventual ruin of the Reeds' estate and his culpability in his mother's slow demise. It is important to know that Jane is not merely reading a history of emperors and their dates of empire; she is reading about Caligula's "unnatural lusts" for his three sisters, the brothel and gaming house he

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[15] Rochester's narratives of his previous masculine adventures, Céline Varens (1.15.146ff), Bertha Mason (3.1.308ff), and finally Jane Eyre (3.11.452), exist only within the context of Jane's more extensive narrative.

controlled in his palace, and his expensive and lavish domestic economy (Goldsmith 167, 173, 170). Always defying nature and, by extension, God, he built houses in the sea, cut his way through rocks of prodigious bulk, levelled mountains, and elevated plains and valleys. Nero, another equally lustful and carnal personage, was tempted to "satisfy his passions" with his own mother but eventually settled on her assassination instead. "Nero . . . gave loose to his appetites, that were not only sordid, but inhuman" (Goldsmith 171, 220, 223). While he killed his wife, Octavia, and his mistress, Poppea, he retained to the bitter end his lover Sporus, a youth whom he had "deprived of the marks of virility" and whom he "married" and treated as his "wife" (Goldsmith 229-30, 242, 230). Little Jane cunningly explains that she had already drawn parallels between these two iniquitous men and her cousin "in silence, which I had never thought thus to have declared aloud" (1.1.11).

In addition to reading Goldsmith's explicit *History of Rome*, Jane also initially finds pleasure in reading Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, a masculine tale of journeys, battles, and trials. She finds these tales more interesting than Bessie's folklore because she reads them as a narrative of facts, filled with elves and fantastic countries such as Lilliput and Brobdingnag (1.3.21). While Gulliver's journey through foreign climes predicts Jane's own journey, she also discovers, as she has earlier with Caligula and Nero, Gulliver's semi- or near-sexual adventures with various types of women and his need to bully and compete against men when he is physically incapable of enjoying these little women. In Lilliput, Gulliver, while drawing attention to the fact that the Treasurer's wife has taken a fancy to him, moves the issue from infidelity to masculine

competition. The continual reference to the Treasurer's hierarchical and professional position (rather than the woman herself) reveals Gulliver's need to compete with this miniature man: "I had the Honour to be a Nardac, which the Treasurer himself is not" (Swift 46). In Brobdingnag, Gulliver is often stripped "naked from Top to Toe" and lain "at full length" on the bosoms of Glumdalclitch and the Queen's Maids of Honour. These maids would also strip themselves to the skin, discharge copious amounts of liquid, and place him astride their nipples, "with many other Tricks" he thinks best to keep to himself (Swift 95-96). These overly aggressive females have discoloured skins with grotesque moles and hairs and give off "very offensive" smells. Their bodies fill him with "Horror and Disgust" (Swift 95).

Jane has learned well; later echoing Gulliver's delineations of the Brobdingnagian women, she describes the foreign and sexually aggressive Bertha Rochester with her "fearful blackened" face and large, hairy body (2.10.286, 2.11.296). Later, Rochester characterises the woman he married: "What a pigmy intellect she had--and what giant propensities! . . . . her vices sprung up fast and rank . . . . a wife at once intemperate and unchaste" (3.1.310). Elaine Showalter, in *A Literature of Their Own*, characterizes Bertha in terms of a filthy Yahoo (115). Equally important is Gulliver's disgust when one of the Yahoo women sexually attacks him while he bathes in the river (Swift 233). Clearly, sexually aggressive women are literally monsters. *Gulliver's Travels*, with elements of a masculine fantasy, symptomatic of adolescent males just coming to terms with changing bodies, is filled with sexual

indiscretions and scatological references.[16] Jane rightly rejects Gulliver as a model when she reads him as "a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions" (1.3.21). She can neither identify with this wanderer nor with the women he encounters.

Jane struggles to find a complementary female story with which to identify her own progress. She explains that Bessie "fed our eager attention with passages of love and adventure taken," as she later discovers, "from the pages of *Pamela* and *Henry, Earl of Moreland*" (1.1.9), novels filled with more flattering representations of women than the insane Gulliver's simplistically adolescent view. Although both novels were written by men, Jane finds her exemplar in Pamela, the lady's maid whose chastity rewards her with marriage to her tormentor, the wealthy landowner Mr B. The parallels between Jane's later relationship with Rochester and Pamela's with Mr B go beyond Pamela's chastity and Mr B's more powerful social class. The banter in which Mr B and Pamela engage convinces the landowner that his mother's lady's maid has an uncommon intelligence and wit: "her Person made me her Lover; but her Mind made her my Wife" (*Pamela* 390; also see 385). Rochester is equally enamoured of Jane's ability to "meet him in argument without fear or uneasy restraint" (2.1.160).

Jane constructs her rival for Rochester's affections as a perfect opposite. Blanche Ingram, while beautiful and attractive, is no Pamela: "her mind was poor, her

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[16] In one instance, Gulliver relieves himself of the previous night's wine on the burning Lilliputian palace, the fire of which is caused by the carelessness of a maid of honour who fell asleep while reading a romance (37). Here is an example of a reading woman as dangerous.

heart barren by nature: nothing bloomed spontaneously in that soil" (2.3.187-88). To blacken Blanche's character even more for her readers, Jane includes Blanche's description of the relationship with her own governess and in particular her relationship with books: "But poor Madame Joubert! I see her yet in her raging passions, when we had . . . tossed our books up to the ceiling . . ." (2.2.179). Blanche is not a reader in the sense that Jane is. This separation between readers and non-readers underscores the moral difference between them. The indolent Georgiana falls asleep "over the perusal of a novel" (2.6.239), while, in contrast, the pious Mary and Diana read and study books with religious energy (3.2.337, 3.4.354, 3.4.355). While Jane's reading provides her with comfort and solace, Blanche's reading only exposes her darker side: "Miss Ingram took a book, leant back in her chair, and so declined further conversation. I watched her for nearly half an hour: during all that time she never turned a page, and her face grew momently darker, more dissatisfied, and more sourly expressive of disappointment" (2.3.196). When Blanche does read, she is "not original" in that she repeats "sounding phrases from books; she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own," and thus "she could not charm" Rochester (2.3.188). Jane, on the other hand, reads for scenarios she will later alter in her own writing.

Since both Pamela and Jane are readers, the writing of each reflects the type of novels they read. Pamela, through her reading, has learned "that many a Man has been asham'd at a Repulse" (*Pamela* 50) and that if she accepted his advances, she would not be worthy to be his wife (*Pamela* 54), a prospect she is obviously considering, "for I have read of Things almost as strange, from great Men to poor

Damsels" (*Pamela* 49). Moreover, by incorporating her own romance reading into her writing,[17] she will in effect alter the course of her own future, for Mr B, like the sultan listening to Scheherazade, wants to read her plot so that he can himself determine the outcome:

> I long to see the Particulars of your Plot . . . . For you have so beautiful a manner . . . that has made me desirous of reading all you write; tho' a great deal of it is against myself; for which you must expect to suffer a little. And as I have furnished you with the Subject, I have a Title to see the Fruits of your Pen.--Besides . . . there is such a pretty Air of Romance, as you relate them, in your Plots, and my Plots, that I shall be better directed in what manner to wind up the Catastrophe of the pretty Novel. (*Pamela* 201)

Thus, Pamela's own romance will echo the romances she reads. It is not surprising, therefore, that the romance that Jane will write years after reading *Pamela* will also reflect the ur-romances of Pamela's reading.

Jane, however, will reject the ending that Mr B seems so confident in concluding. She will rewrite her own, giving herself, not Rochester, authority over the romantic ending. In the gipsy scene, Jane, impatient at hearing about Rochester's future and not her own, is told by gipsy-Rochester that "Chance has meted you a measure of happiness . . . . It depends on yourself to stretch out your hand, and take it up" (2.4.202). Although Rochester here expects Jane to marry him or, at worst,

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[17] Pamela herself makes the connection between her reading and her writing: "I love Reading, and Scribbling" (227). The proximity of these two pastimes encourages her own readers to assume that the former enhances the latter.

become his mistress, she will accept neither ending. Seeking to control her own future, she successfully leaves Thornfield; and as an agent of her own future, she voluntarily returns to Rochester. Although Pamela leaves (albeit with Mr B's permission first) and returns voluntarily at his request, she does so as an inferior member in their relationship. Mr B, a would-be seducer of virtue, even has the audacity to command Pamela what to wear and what time to eat her breakfast. She begs for his condescension: "O dearest, dear Sir, said I, have you no more of your sweet Injunctions to honour me with? They oblige and improve me at the same time! --What a happy Lot is mine!" (*Pamela* 309). Rather than emphasizing his commands, the married Jane articulates her own agency in caring for Rochester by placing the emphasis on the subjective "I": "I was then his vision, as I am still his right hand . . . Never did I weary of reading to him; never did I weary of conducting him where he wished to go" (3.12.456). We never hear Pamela suggest that she is equal to Mr B as we hear Jane tell her "master" (2.8.256).

In addition to incorporating and rewriting the Pamela plot, she also turns to other female fantasies, such as "Little Red Riding-Hood," "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Bluebeard," and "Beauty and the Beast" to construct an appropriate female identity. These fairy tales also help Jane, in the words of Bruno Bettelheim, "to undo the repression of sex" (2.10.279). If fairy tales encourage girls to anticipate marriage, the subtext prepares them for the sexual aspect, a concept often understood years after recognising a "married" couple. After passing the tests for virtue and domesticity, the princess is rewarded with physical union with a desirable prince rather than a

detestable monster. In each tale, however, Jane rejects the uncomplicated view of woman afforded by the distinguishing marks of passivity, domesticity, and rescue by the prince. Her emerging sexuality will not be of the passive sort. She will voluntarily return to the more passionate Rochester, rather than marry cold, morbid St John Rivers.

Particular plot devices and characterizations, common to the fairy tale, inform the narrative structure of *Jane Eyre*. *Jane Eyre* incorporates a number of motifs found in fairy tales: a wicked step-mother and spiteful step-sisters; an unobtainable or mysteriously disappearing lover; ineffectual father figures such as her biological father, Mr Reed, John Eyre, the Rev. St John Rivers; the sufferings, degradations, and wanderings of the heroine; and the happy ending (Imlay 70). Underlying these common devices is the child's need to explore and experiment with different identities.[18] The cyclical journey, appearing most often in male fantasies, is one such device which allows the child-hero to return home the victor. Jane, not satisfied with a single triumphant return home, undertakes two overlapping cyclical journeys. The first has her return to Gateshead a mature and controlled woman who has another, more loving home elsewhere. The second has her return to Rochester an "independent woman" who now can tease him, as he had done her earlier, with the riddle of the rival (3.11.440, 3.11.447-48).

In addition to the cyclical journey, *Jane Eyre*, like the fairy tale, offers

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[18] See Bettelheim for a child's need for personal knowledge (47) and Imlay for a discussion of Jane's various identities (34).

magnified characterizations split into extremes of good and bad. If we look at the first half of the novel as a quest for parental love, then Jane must come up against examples of both good and bad maternal and paternal figures. The 'bad mother' (or evil step-mother figure) is exemplified by Mrs Reed, the 'good mother' by Miss Temple, who refers to Jane and Helen Burns as "my children" (1.8.74). In league with the evil step-mother is her masculine counterpart, Mr Brocklehurst, who sets down commandments as if he were the Father. The good Miss Temple assures Jane that he "is not a god" (1.8.69).

Miss Temple, in turn, applies to Mr Lloyd, the good father figure whose name hints of a higher Lord, to counter the claims of the evil Reed and Brocklehurst 'parental' duo. Miss Temple, as a good mother should, exhibits to Jane the natural progression for females. Jane laments the fact that a Rev Mr Nasmyth has come between her and Miss Temple. After Miss Temple's marriage, Jane undergoes a transformation from girl to woman, replacing her parental love with romantic love: "another discovery dawned on me . . . I had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple--or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been breathing in her vicinity--and that now I was left in my natural element; and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions" (1.10.8).

At Thornfield Hall, on Jane's subsequent journey towards romantic love, she encounters paired rivals: beautiful Blanche and bloated Bertha (Sulivan 68). Blanche and Bertha are physically similar. Blanche is as "dark as a Spaniard" (2.2.175) and

reminds Rochester of the younger Bertha: "I found [Bertha] a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram, tall, dark, and majestic" (3.1.309). While Blanche appears in "civilized social settings," her Brobdingnagian twin "occasionally emerges from hiding during the night and indulges her bestial instincts" (Sulivan 68).

Jane also pairs or, perhaps more accurately, splits the characterization of her lover into the good and the bad one. Jane obviously prefers the passionate sexuality of the fiery Rochester to the cool logic of the passionless St John Rivers. St John explains that "natural affection only . . . has permanent power" over him and "Reason, and not Feeling," is his guide (3.6.379). Rochester, on the other hand, must fight his passionate urges of "straining" Jane to his heart (3.1.319). The issue of what constitutes a successful "marriage" seems central here. Jane is willing to return to an unsanctified but passionate union with Rochester, a rejection of the legal but dispassionate marriage St John offers her. A legal marriage to St John will literally be the death of her, an irreparable erasure of her identity.

The first words Jane hears Rochester speak are his catechismal curses, "some formula which prevented him from replying" to her queries over his well-being (1.12.114). Here the active Jane helps Rochester after his fall and readily answers all his questions to her (1.12.115-16). In contrast, St John's first words, "All men must die," echo the scriptures (3.2.340). Here the active St John helps the starving and passive Jane, whose weakness prevents her from answering his family's questions to her (3.2.342). In both cases, Rochester and St John "seemed puzzled to decide what [Jane] was" (1.12.115; 3.2.341). Rochester sees Jane and thinks of "fairy tales"

(1.13.123); St John and his sisters see a "mere spectre" (3.2.341).

According to Elizabeth Imlay, Brontë, in order to split the suitors, has Rochester return from the West Indies and Rivers embark for the East, to India. While Rochester's wealth has partly come from slavery, St John plans to spend his meagre inheritance on the Hindus of India. Rochester returns to his home, where he remains, concentrating his energies on Jane. St John, on the other hand, "flings out into the world, scatters himself, and dies." In contrast, Rochester marries Jane and recreates himself in his son (Imlay 60).

In fairy tales a certain amount of repetition ensures the right response from listeners. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane's description of both the Ingrams and the Reeds elicits the same response from the reader. Mrs Reed and Lady Ingram share physical (and we can assume spiritual) characteristics. Mrs Reed "was a woman of robust frame, square shouldered and strong-limbed, not tall, and though stout not obese; she had a somewhat *large* face, the under-jaw being much developed and very solid; her brow was low, her chin *large* and prominent" (1.4.35, italics mine). Lady Ingram

> had Roman features and a double chin, disappearing into a throat like a *pillar*. These features appeared to me not only *inflated* and darkened, but even furrowed with pride; and the chin was sustained by the same principle, in a position of almost preternatural erectness. She had, likewise, a fierce and a hard eye: it reminded me of Mrs. Reed's (2.2.174, italics mine).

The descriptions, while pairing the two evil mothers by emphasizing their large, dark, and pillar shapes, also suggest a moral relationship to Brocklehurst, who displays a

similar physique (1.4.31). The diminutive Jane's descriptions also connect her female rivals to their wicked mothers. The Ingram sisters have inherited their mother's lofty stature (2.2.174) and the Reed daughters appear more like their own mother, haughty and proud with the inability to show affection. Even Bertha has inherited her mother's madness (3.1.310). In contrast to this wickedness in mothers and daughters, both the good and kindly Rivers sisters, counterparts to the other evil cousins, and Jane Eyre, herself, are motherless.[19]

In many of these female-oriented fairy tales, Jane finds pleasure in the sexual connotations contained in them, although she may not accept the male character provided. She can enjoy vicariously the suggestion of sexual union at the end of each tale since as a woman she has learned that it is acceptable to be sexually passive. Jane is probably more familiar with the sexually explicit fairy tales collected or written by Charles Perrault (1628-1703) than those by the Grimm brothers, for we are told she has read and hopes to "translate," at Lowood, "a certain little French story-book" lent her from Madam Pierrot, whose name obviously recalls Perrault's (1.8.76; also see Sulivan 64, Imlay 10). In Perrault's tale of little red Riding-Hood, first translated with other fairy tales into English in 1729 as *Histories or Tales of Past Times*, the wicked wolf, implicitly a rapist, eats little red Riding-Hood after she crawls naked into bed with him (Opie 119-125). Using this pattern, Jane becomes little red Riding-Hood to

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[19] Jane compares herself to both the Reed daughters and Blanche Ingram, finding them equally wanting. Jane tells Mrs Reed that her daughters "are not fit to associate" with her (1.4.27), and she tells her readers that Blanche Ingram is "too inferior to excite" jealousy (2.3.187).

Brocklehurst's wolf: "What a face he had, now that it was aln.ost on a level with mine! what a great nose! and what a mouth! and what large prominent teeth!" (1.4.32). Maintaining his inhuman proportions, Brocklehurst's description is phallic and, as Karen Rowe has noticed, owes much to Gulliver's Brobdingnagian world (Rowe 35). "I looked up at--a black pillar!--such, at least, appeared to me, at first sight, the straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug: the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital" (1.4.31).

Just as little red Riding-Hood's identity is consumed by the ravenous wolf, Jane's identity is assailed by the reading Brocklehurst holds out to her: the Bible, particularly the psalms (1.4.33), and "The Child's Guide" emphasizing a desire for death (1.4.35). Jane's identification with little red Riding-Hood, however, demonstrates profound insight into the "pious" Mr. Brocklehurst. In Brocklehurst's attempt to form the identities of his charges at Lowood, he quotes biblical authority to justify starving the girls and denying them their sexuality, both privations to their bodies: "if ye suffer hunger or thirst for my sake, happy are ye" (1.7.63). Later, another man of God, St John, reiterates to Jane the same religious precept that there is "danger in yielding to the cravings of your appetite" (3.3.350). Brocklehurst also wishes to control the girls' sensuality (or rather he exposes his own lustful cravings). When he is informed that a girl's "abundance" of curled red hair is natural, he replies "we are not to conform to nature" (1.7.64), a commandment suggesting that what is natural in woman is sinful, recalling Eve's original sin. What he wants his emaciated and shorn flock to conform to is to "books of his own inditing, about sudden deaths

and judgments, which made us afraid to go to bed" (1.13.124). In this new mirror that Brocklehurst supplies, Jane, unlike the devout Helen Burns, does not recognise herself as the passive and dying child. She announces early to him that she intends to "keep in good health, and not die" (1.4.32). In this paradigm, Helen identifies with Brocklehurst's devoutly dying girls who anticipate their return to the Heavenly Father's home with an almost masochistic hope. From Brocklehurst's censure describing his mission "to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh" (1.7.65), Helen repeats his strictures that "we are and must be, one and all, burdened with faults in this world: but the time will soon come when, I trust, we shall put them off in putting off our corruptible bodies" (1.6.59). Helen, like Narcissus looking into his own reflection in the pool, will recognise herself, a fact that encourages her death.[20] Jane, despite Brocklehurst's mirror, does not see herself, disembodied, uniting with a Father.

Although Jane never mentions "Cinderella," the plot suggests that Jane sees herself as a Cinderella figure. Charlotte Brontë could have been familiar with three different English versions of this fairy tale. In 1721, "Finetta the Cinder-girl" was published in Madame d'Aulnoy's English *Collection of Novels and Tales*. In this version, the story resembles "Hansel and Gretel"; and instead of a fairy god-mother, Finetta discovers a gold key in the ashes, which opens a chest full of beautiful dresses (synopsis in Opie 155). In 1729, "Cinderella or the Little Glass Slipper" was

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[20] Refer to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In Book III, Ovid tells the story of Narcissus who is warned by Tiresias, the blind seer, that he will only grow old "if he ne'er know himself" (Ovid, vol.1, l. 348). His unrequited desire and eventually recognition of his own reflection precipitate his own death: "He loves an unsubstantial hope and thinks that substance which is only shadow" (Ovid, vol. 1, l. 416-417).

published in Perrault's *Histories or Tales of Past Times* (text in Opie 161-166). This version, more familiar to twentieth-century readers, has, for example, the fairy god-mother producing a coach and six out of a pumpkin and rats. At the end, Cinderella embraces and forgives her sisters, begging them "always to love her" (Opie 166). In 1823, Edgar Taylor published his English translation of the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen* of which "Aschenputtel" was No. 21 (text in Grimm 225-231). In this more bloody and violent rendering, Cinderella is helped to the prince's ball by two white doves, who later inform the prince of the false sisters: "Rookity-coo, rookity-coo! / Her foot is bleeding in the shoe, / Her foot's too long or her foot's too wide: / He's left her behind, the rightful bride" (Grimm 230). At the end, Cinderella, unlike Perrault's forgiving one, lets the birds mete out her revenge by pecking out the step-sisters' eyes (Grimm 231). In *Jane Eyre*, as in the fairy tale, Mrs Reed, the evil step-mother, attempts to separate Jane from her birthright, her paternal uncle's estate; and the evil step-sisters, in the shape of Georgiana and Eliza, are clearly never to be forgiven or to marry as well as Jane, who has suffered their disdain and pride. Gilbert and Gubar, in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, rightly point out that Jane Eyre's name is suggestive of her status: she is "invisible as air" and "the heir to nothing." They also suggest that she is "secretly choking with ire" (3.2.342), an attitude sadly lacking in Perrault's "Cinderella." Jane, like Cinderella, is employed to act as "under nursery-maid, to tidy the room, dust the chairs" (1.4.30). Jane, like her predecessor, is mentally and physically abused (1.2.15) and excluded from family festivities and gatherings where Eliza and Georgiana, "dressed out in thin muslin

frocks and scarlet sashes, with hair elaborately ringletted," echo the evil step-sisters' preparations for the prince's ball (1.4.28). To balance off the evil step-mother, Miss Temple, as fairy godmother, rescues Jane from ignominy by publicly vindicating her of any wrong-doing.

Jane, however, upsets the Cinderella plot by returning to Gateshead to see Mrs Reed die. She employs the male-fantasy cyclical journey motif in which the young hero returns home triumphant and victorious. In her altered fairy tale, the reader can enjoy the heroine's superiority over her cousins without having her marriage to confirm it. When she returns, Jane claims that "the same hostile roof now again rose before me." She recalls Brocklehurst and her humiliations in that house. She even distinguishes Bewick's *British Birds* and *Gulliver's Travels* on the shelf. "The inanimate objects were not changed." But Jane claims that "the gaping wound of my wrongs, too, was now quite healed; and the flame of resentment extinguished" (2.6.230). But I would argue that the flame has not been extinguished entirely. As a child, Jane outlines her world philosophy that "when we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard . . . so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again" (1.6.58). Although the older Jane subscribes, on the surface, to a more patient philosophy, her feelings and outrage smoulder beneath. Jane's "flame" either has been repressed or perhaps passed on to Jane's interested reader. Her return, her recollection of particularly hurtful events, and the aftermath to John Reed's dissipation clearly provide a justified closure to that part of her life. Jane would never gloat; but, just by re-introducing her wrongs and her "flame of resentment," she

encourages her readers to exult. Later, to conclude her dismantled Cinderella plot, Jane will eventually find two other but sweet-tempered female cousins to replace the wicked ones.

At Thornfield, Jane's ambivalence towards Rochester fluctuates between images of him as the prince come to wake his beloved princess who has slept away a century and as "Bluebeard" (1.11.108), a fitting description when Bertha is discovered locked in the attic. Jane's imprisonment in the red room is, according to Karen Rowe, a "variation on the death and sleeps that afflict all adolescent females in these folktales" (Rowe 73). Rowe, however, fails to document a poignant episode that illustrates Jane's own connection between death and sleep and her subsequent refusal to entertain death. Little Jane, asleep with her arms entwined around the dying Helen Burns, awakes to find her friend dead: "I was asleep, and Helen was--dead" (1.9.83).[21] Brontë seems to portray more Jane's waking than her sleeping. When Jane awakes from her "frightful night-mare" in the red room, she sees Mr Lloyd, a fatherly figure, almost a good fairy, who provides her with "inexpressible relief, a soothing conviction of protection and security" (1.3.18, 19). In contrast to Jane's nightmare, Sleeping Beauty, it is assumed "during so long a sleep," had "very agreeable dreams" (Opie 114). In this version, Sleeping Beauty immediately marries her Prince "in the chapel of the castle, and the chief lady of honour drew the curtains." We are told that "they slept very little; the Princess had no occasion" (Opie 114), a comment clearly meant to

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[21] Also see Prentis, who reads Jane's sleeps as a triumph of innocence over certain perils (19).

raise eye-brows.

Brontë is likely to have been familiar with both the Perrault and the Grimm versions of "Sleeping Beauty." The English version of the much shorter and more recent Grimm fairy tale ("Briar-Rose" 1823) is more familiar to us (Grimm 70-73). The earlier and longer Perrault English edition (1729), modelled on an earlier version, Basile's *Pentamerone* (1636), contains parallel elements significant to Jane's experiences. In Perrault, the prince marries the awakened Sleeping Beauty, at first unbeknownst to his queen-mother, an ogre. After two years (and two children by Sleeping Beauty), the prince inherits his father's kingdom and brings his family home. In the prince's castle now live two queens, his queen-mother and queen-wife, a situation intolerable to the older jealous queen. When her son is absent from the castle, the queen mother is tricked out of eating her daughter-in-law and grandchildren. The enraged ogre, on seeing her son return home early, commits suicide by jumping into a vat of vipers (Opie 108-119). Jane Eyre's story recalls the earlier Perrault fairy tale, adapting the two rival queens and the prevalently paralysed prince, who is unable to confront his mother or save his wife. The resolution is brought about by the self-destruction of the 'other' woman rather than any rescue effort by the son-husband.

Jane manipulates this fairy tale, as she has done with the other stories she has read, for she has the other, first woman of the house attempt to kill the prince, not the princess; and the princess, Jane, is very much awake and not inclined to sleep ignorantly and innocently for a hundred years. Indeed, Jane's wakefulness allows her to rescue Rochester, who is in a "deep sleep," from being engulfed in flames

(1.15.149). She, like the Prince in "Sleeping Beauty," must later penetrate the verdant growth isolating Rochester, the Sleeping Beauty. Ferndean, isolated in a thick forest, where Jane initially thinks she has lost her way (3.11.435), provides her with her own fairy tale garden of Eden: "We entered the wood, and wended homeward" (3.11.454). Rochester, in one sense, performs a similar function to the prince in the fairy tale, in that his arrival at Thornfield rescues Jane from the restlessness she feels there. For Jane, imprisoned like Bertha, finds solace in ceaselessly walking back and forth on the third story, allowing her "mind's eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it . . . . to open my inward ear to a tale that was never ended--a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously" (1.12.110). Jane, before Rochester's arrival, is "weary of an existence all passive" (1.12.117).

In addition to her modifications, when Jane constructs Thornfield as Sleeping Beauty's resting place, she occupies various subject positions in this fairy tale. She is both the wandering, wondering prince who first comes across the castle after a century and the princess who understands what it feels like to be shut up in a bedroom:

> The large front chambers I thought especially grand; and some of the third story rooms, though dark and low, were interesting from their air of antiquity. . . . and the imperfect light entering by their narrow casements showed bedsteads of a hundred years old . . . . stools still more antiquated, on whose cushioned tops were yet apparent traces of half-effaced embroideries, wrought by fingers that for two generations had been coffin dust. All these relics gave to the third story of Thornfield Hall the aspect of a home of the past: a shrine

> of memory . . . But I by no means coveted a night's repose on one of those wide and heavy beds: shut in, some of them, with doors of oak; shaded, others, with wrought old English hangings crusted with thick work. (1.11.106-7)

When Jane asks if anyone sleeps on this floor, Mrs Fairfax responds that "no one ever sleeps here" (1.11.107). Ironically, this is true, for Bertha Rochester, no sleeping beauty but still the tenant of these antiquated rooms, laughs, shrieks, and wanders the lower floors more often than she appears to sleep.

At this point in Jane's revision, her tale begins to resemble the "Bluebeard" plot with Rochester in the leading role. Mrs Fairfax, during Jane's tour of the Hall, proposes that if any ghost haunted Thornfield, the third floor would be the site (1.11.107). Jane herself describes the narrow hall with its shut doors, behind one of which Bertha lurks, as a "corridor in some Bluebeard's castle" (1.11.108). Rochester, just like Bluebeard hiding his previous wives behind a locked door, has indeed a ghost, his mad wife Bertha. And Jane hints that she would share the same fate with Bertha if she too "married" Rochester. She argues that if she keeps the law of God and does not "marry" the bigamous Rochester she will be safe from the madness that she feels: "I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad--as I am now" (3.1.321). She later reflects that if she became Rochester's mistress, he would love her well half her time and only for a while. She hints that she would then be discarded, a "slave in a fool's paradise at Marseilles--fevered with delusive bliss one hour--suffocating with the bitterest tears of remorse and shame the

next" (3.5.364). Rochester suggests that if she "were mad," he would confine her with an embrace, "at least as fond as it would be restrictive" (3.1.305), an endearment not altogether cajoling to the excited Jane.

At Thornfield, Jane's relationship with the far from handsome Rochester (1.12.114) resembles that with the seldom seen Beast in Madame de Beaumont's text of "Beauty and the Beast," first translated in 1761. When Rochester surmises that Jane thinks he eats like an "ogre," she continues to request their impending marriage be put off for another month. In language reminiscent of the Beast's entreaty to see Beauty in the evening (Opie 190), Jane suggests that they keep to their usual timetable: "I shall keep out of your way all day, as I have been accustomed to do: you may send for me in the evening, when you feel disposed to see me, and I'll come then; but at no other time" (2.9.273). In the fairy tale, the Beast asks Beauty, "do not you think me very ugly?" Beauty, who cannot tell a lie, agrees that he is (Opie 190). In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester similarly asks Jane, "do you think me handsome?" Jane, like Beauty, equally truthful, answers "No, sir" (1.14.132). At the end, when Rochester should have been transformed into the handsome prince, he again asks "Am I hideous, Jane?" Here she agrees: "Very, sir: you always were, you know" (3.11.443). Like the Beast, Rochester also allows Jane to return to her family, albeit the contemptible Reeds. Just as Beauty's sisters delayed her from returning to the Beast, the odious Georgiana and Eliza both convince Jane to stay after their mother has died to render them various services (2.7.243-244). Jane, unlike Beauty, has earlier refused to promise Rochester when she will return for she "might be obliged to break it"

(2.6.226).[22] Jane, at her tale's conclusion, is summoned by a disembodied voice to find a very ill and heartsick lover, buried in his forest retreat. Likewise, Beauty returns to her Beast after she dreams of him expiring (Opie 193). However, to Jane's Beauty,[23] Rochester is both her merchant father and her animal lover. Jane loves the much older Rochester, who provides her with a relatively stable home life. Mrs Fairfax warns Jane that "he might almost be your father" (2.9.267), and Rochester, describing himself as old enough to be her father (1.14.135), laments that he ought to "entertain none but fatherly feelings" for her (3.11.441). Moreover, Jane cannot marry him since he is already married. Bertha, the mother, stands in the way (literally, Bertha actually blocks Jane's access to her mirror and to her new identity as Mrs Rochester). After St John rescues Jane, he wants to be her lover, albeit a platonic one focussing on the spiritual rather than the physical. Her rejection of this lover requires her return to the "father" who is then transformed into the lover. His blindness is emblematic of his transformation.

When Jane does not marry Rochester the first time, she ruptures the traditional fairy-tale plot. The final declarative "reader, I married him" transforms the passive heroine into an actor. While the general structure of the fairy tale remains the same, the subjective "I" clearly converts the third-person heroine of the fairy tales into the

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[22] Also see Elizabeth Imlay, page 72.

[23] Jane is quite adamant in distancing herself from any person remotely beautiful: "I had a theoretical reverence and homage for beauty . . . but had I met these qualities incarnate in masculine shape, I should have known instinctively that they neither had nor could have sympathy with anything in me" (1.12.115).

active reader, writer, and heroine of her own tale. By rewriting the plots she has read, Jane rescripts and thereby controls her identity, despite the machinations of the other characters. She no longer is the fairy or elf, wild cat or demon. The culminating point for Jane is when, by maintaining her own identity, she resists but then can afford to accept the domestic ending to female fantasies. She explains that through her care of Rochester, she fulfills the role of reader and writer for she describes the world for him: "He saw nature--he saw books through me; and never did I weary of gazing for his behalf, and of putting into words . . . the landscape before us . . . . Never did I weary of reading to him" (3.12.456).

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* echoes the Christian plot describing the Fall and its resolution: sin and salvation. Even the fairy tales that Jane reads have been Christianized by western thought. By the nineteenth century, fairy tales and mythologies, merged into a religious focus, were more concerned with morality than with survival. Beauty or Cinderella are rewarded with the prince not because they are beautiful but because they are virtuous, kind, hard-working, and respectful of authority. Even a classical story of "Cupid and Psyche," with variations in "Sleeping Beauty" and "Beauty and the Beast,"[24] becomes one of the virtuous Christian soul in search of immortality in Heaven. Thus, the moral Jane's "physical inferiority" (1.1.7), in this Christian rewriting of the myth, will not bar her from reaping her reward of returning home to her "Master."

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[24] "Rapunzel" uses similar motifs: the jealous mother figure, who precipitates the separation and trials before the lovers can be reunited. In "Rapunzel," "Cupid and Psyche," and *Jane Eyre*, sight and blindness are suggestive of a transgression.

Jane's Christian story will lead her on a pilgrimage: what some critics have argued is her pilgrimage to a "life of wholeness" (Gilbert and Gubar 366). This suggests that the young Jane inherently is missing some aspect of her being. I would argue that Jane does not need to change or alter; but rather she needs to find some sanctuary in this world where both sides of her being, her fire and ice, passion and logic, dreams and work, can find fertile ground.

The first sentence of *Jane Eyre* points to her eventual spiritual journey towards her Celestial City away from the Reed's desolate winter garden with its "leafless shrubbery" (1.1.7), as symbolized by Bewick in his *History of British Birds*. Jane is actually glad the inclement weather prevents her from "taking a walk *that day*" (1.1.7, italics mine), a suggestion that another day will be more propitious. Like Christian in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Jane must wend her way through allegorically-named places (Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, and Marsh End).

Her journey begins at the oppressive Gateshead, the name of which reflects her restriction ("gate") and origin ("head"). Here Jane, echoing Christian's first words at the beginning of his journey, whispers "What shall I do?--what shall I do?" (1.4.39).[25] During her journey, various protectors and guides along her path try to answer the question for her. At Thornfield, she asks "What am I to do?" (3.1.301) to which her conscience answers. At Marsh End, St John attempts to answer her comparable question, "what do the women do?" (3.2.331). For St John envisions Jane as his helpmeet, his beast of burden. Jane will eventually answer her own question, asked

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[25] Also see Gilbert and Gubar (343) and Imlay (34).

earlier in the barren winter garden. For her quest will lead her to be Rochester's "prop and guide" (3.11.454).

Just as Christian's progress to the Celestial City brings him in contact with others by whom he learns, Jane too meets guides who suggest alternative identities. Bessie, who like Scheherazade had a "remarkable knack of narrative" (1.4.29) and speaks to Jane with "no harsh voice" (1.2.13), gives her some comfort and tenderness.[26] Bessie's stories and songs, while not exactly bringing jubilation to the young orphan, do shed light on her status in the world and her difficult path to maturity: "My feet they are sore, and my limbs they are weary; / Long is the way, and the mountains are wild; / Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary / Over the path of the poor orphan child." Bessie's song, recalling Christian's journey and anticipating both Brocklehurst's and St John's morbid chorus, suggests that the orphan Jane will find a home only after death: "There is a thought that for strength should avail me, / Though both of shelter and kindred despoiled: / Heaven is a home, and rest will not fail me; / God is a friend to the poor orphan child" (1.3.22).

At Lowood, situated in a valley, "dark with wood" (1.5.42), Brocklehurst attempts to starve her of her passionate nature earlier exhibited at Gateshead. Here, in echoes from the Valley of Humiliation where Christian confronts the foul fiend,

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[26] Jane appears to find comfort with fellow narrators. As a narrator herself, Jane enjoys the company of her Lowood friend, Mary Ann Wilson, who has a "turn for narrative" and tells Jane "amusing stories" (1.9.78). Rochester's tales and stories of his adventures in the world give Jane pleasure, improve her health, and make her fall in love with the story-teller (1.15.146-7). In contrast, Sophie, the French nurse, does not interest Jane at all because she has "not [the] descriptive or narrative turn" (1.12.111).

Apollyon, Brocklehurst humiliates and accuses Jane of being a liar (1.7.67). However, up until this point in Jane's Christian story, she argues for her innocence. Unlike Christian with his post-lapsarian burden of sin, Jane will not wear the guilt of Eve offered by Brocklehurst to his orphan girls. The young Jane is adamant that she tells the truth and is not a liar. "What does Bessie say I have done?" is her response when chastised at Gateshead (1.1.7). Her outburst against Mrs Reed is occasioned when she is given a Christian tract, "containing the sudden death of the Liar" as a warning. She responds that "Deceit is not my fault" (1.4.37). Again and again, Jane claims to have been "wrongfully accused" (1.8.71). With the help of Miss Temple, the young Jane, as an apprentice autobiographer, must learn to trust her "memory" and tell only what is "true" in her story, to "add nothing and exaggerate nothing" (1.8.71). Her exoneration later proves her innocence (and ensures our trust in her narration). This experience for Jane has the same effect that Christian feels when he can drop his burden of sin: "Thus relieved of a grievous load, I from that hour set to work afresh, resolved to pioneer my way through every difficulty" (1.8.75).

At Lowood, where Jane learns to control her ire and her burning passions, she is offered two womanly alternatives. The pathetic Helen Burns cautions Jane not to be "too impulsive, too vehement." Helen, burning with spiritual passion, explains that God "waits only the separation of spirit from flesh to crown us with a full reward" (1.8.70). Although this temporarily calms the agitated Jane, she still questions "Where is God? What is God?" (1.9.82). Helen in answer anticipates St John's later longing for death: "I am sure there is a future state; I believe God is good: I can resign my

immortal part to him without any misgiving. God is my father; God is my friend" (1.9.82). That Jane continues to ask whether that "region of happiness" really exists suggests that Helen's dying testament does not convince her. Jane, in search of a loving home, will not accept Helen's form of self-renunciation.

Miss Temple, on the other hand, is an educated woman supporting herself and not, like Helen, pining for the grave. She has all the womanly qualities valued by but not yet cultivated in the young Jane: she "had always something of serenity in her air, of state in her mien, of refined propriety in her language, which precluded deviation into the ardent, the excited, the eager: something which chastened the pleasure of those who looked on her and listened to her, by a controlling sense of awe" (1.8.73). But Jane observes the physical cost to this paragon to womanhood in her response to the pillar of patriarchy, Mr Brocklehurst:

> Miss Temple had looked down when he first began to speak to her; but she now gazed straight before her, and her face, naturally pale as marble, appeared to be assuming also the coldness and fixity of that material: especially her mouth closed as if it would have required a sculptor's chisel to open it, and her brow settled gradually into petrified severity. (1.7.64)

According to Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of this passage, Miss Temple is more than the angel-in-the-house, suggested by her name: she is more house than angel. Her marble columns seem designed to balance the bad pillar Mr Brocklehurst (Gilbert and Gubar 345). Oppressed Jane, the young Cinderella, realizes that she cannot become her good fairy godmother. Jane, however, does try to emulate her. She almost

succeeds, explaining that "I was quiet; I believed I was content: to the eyes of others, usually even to my own, I appeared a disciplined and subdued character." After Miss Temple marries and leaves, the Byronic heroine, the Angrian Cinderella, feels "the stirring of old emotions" (1.10.85).

Jane's next stage of her spiritual journey takes her to Thornfield Hall where, thinking her couch had "no thorns in it", she enters what she believes is a "fairer era of life" in which she will experience both "flowers and pleasures" and "thorns and toils" (1.11.99). Here, Jane encounters four representations of womanhood. Adèle Varens and Blanche Ingram, the ornamental women, have learned to play for their reward, a sufficiently wealthy husband. Jane ironically finds her pupil, Adèle, "sufficiently docile," an odd echo of Mrs Reed's and Brocklehurst's hopes for Jane. Adèle, like Blanche, prefers to sing, dance, and wear pretty frocks rather than adhere to Jane's encouragements to study (1.11.104, 1.14.130). Blanche, a mature version of Adèle, has learned to play the marriage market.[27] Her games to win a husband, symbolically represented in charades, are games Jane significantly refuses to play (2.3.184). In the charades, Blanche appears in two scenes: in one she plays the bride (2.3.185) and in the other Rebecca (2.3.186), the chosen bride for Abraham's son Isaac (Genesis 24). The two words, forming a single word "Bridewell," a prison in London

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[27] Although we may assume that Adèle, with Jane's patient tutelage, will later be corrected of Blanche's faults, both are overly concerned with dress and performance when we meet them. Both also cater to Rochester in return for what they believe he can give them: a husband for Blanche and clothes for Adèle.

for both criminal men and women, point to Blanche's moral degeneracy.[28]

Mrs Fairfax and Grace Poole, both dependents of Rochester, have learned to negotiate their survival within the restrictions of their society. Mrs Fairfax, Rochester's distant relation, is quite lonely at Thornfield, knitting night after night in her room (1.11.97-98) like an aging Penelope waiting for her Odysseus. Jane marvels at the order in the Thornfield rooms, to which Mrs Fairfax explains that she thought it best to conform to Rochester's "tastes and habits" (1.11.105). Although Jane values the goodness of Mrs Fairfax, she still believes in the "existence of other and more vivid kinds of goodness, and what I believed in I wished to behold" (1.12.110). Grace Poole, also companionless, lives as a "prisoner in his dungeon" on the third floor (2.2.166). This "mystery of mysteries" to Jane (2.4.205) appears to exhibit the loudness and brazenness that was driven out of the younger Jane. Mrs Fairfax, in hearing the wild laughter, admonishes Grace Poole to be quiet and "remember directions!" (1.11.108). Although Grace Poole is intimately aware of the living first Mrs Rochester (3.1.313-14), she is silent when Rochester announces to his household his upcoming nuptials to Jane. This demonstrates her complicity in the morally corrupt patriarchal marriage market, often described by Jane herself as a Turkish seraglio, hence foreign and corrupt.

At Thornfield, Jane must not only contend with her bleak and lonely future as a dependent, but also confront her own repressed rage and passions, embodied in her

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[28] In 1556, Bridewell, originally built as a palace, was turned into a prison, hospital, and workrooms (*The London Encyclopædia* 86-87).

nemesis, Bertha. Critics have convincingly compared Jane with Bertha Rochester.[29] Jane apparently is the only one to notice the lunatic's laugh, and Jane's early capacity for passionate excess (1.1.11) is often compared to Bertha's. Like Bertha, the young Jane and her "uncontrolled play" of feelings must be restrained (1.4.38). Just as Bertha has her outbursts, the older, stifled Jane, at Thornfield, eventually gives "voice to a rhetoric of rebellion and passionate self-affirmation" (Nestor 54):

> Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (1.12.110-111)

Despite the parallels between the two women, however, Rochester is attracted to Jane because of her difference from his first wife: "look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder--this face with that mask--this form with that bulk" (2.11.297). Rochester desires the "antipodes of the Creole" (3.1.315).

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[29] On the identification of Jane with Bertha, see Carolyn Williams, "Closing The Book: The Intertextual End of *Jane Eyre*," (1989); Susan Wolstenholme, *Gothic (Re)Visions: Writing Women as Readers* (1993); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1984); and Margaret Kirkham, "Reading the Brontës," *Women Reading Women's Writing* (1987).

As an antithesis to Bertha and her promiscuity (3.1.310), Jane attempts to affirm the difference: she learns to hide her desire.

But the spectre of sensual, excessive Bertha still haunts Jane's autobiography. And in other ways, Jane can reclaim banished desire through her reading. The controlled and quiet governess's sojourn at Thornfield corresponds to her most fantastical images and descriptions, reflecting Bessie's violent stories and her own eclectic reading from folk lore, *The Arabian Nights*, Bewick's *Birds*. Thornfield appears like a "fairy place" behind a "Tyrian-dyed curtain" (1.11.105); the romantic Jane first meets Rochester, the fairy prince who needs to be rescued, in a fairy land of Gytrashes and spirits (1.12.113); and, as her affianced master, he is the sultan lavishing jewels and gems on his slave.[30] Jane also experiences her prophetic dreams here: her sleeping is her waking. Like Christian, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, she has inadvertently fallen asleep near Doubting Castle which belongs to the ogre, Giant Despair. When Christian awakes a prisoner in Giant Despair's castle, Diffidence, Giant Despair's wife, has already planned his death.

Jane's attempt to save Rochester from his moral fall (prefigured when she helps him during their first meeting after his fall from his horse) echoes Christian's failed attempt to save his wife, Christiana.[31] Jane also strives to "baptize" Rochester after his

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[30] The mysterious Rochester also names his black gelding after Masrur, the Caliph's executioner in the story of "The Porter and the Three Girls of Baghdad" (*Tales from the Thousand and One Nights* 251, 288).

[31] See *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II: "She was . . . much broken with recalling to remembrance the restless groans, brinish tears, and self-bemoanings of her husband, and how she did harden her heart against all his entreaties and loving persuasions of

near immolation. Instead of reading this action as Grace, Rochester accuses Jane of bringing on a "flood" in order, the reader can assume, to eradicate the sinful (1.15.150). Yet he does believe her presence has done him good: she is "the pilgrim . . . a disguised deity" come to relieve his sins (1.14.138). Rochester is not saved at this point since, in attempting to marry Jane in a bigamous ceremony, a mockery of her Christian ideals, he is "little better than a devil" (2.11.294).[32] When Rochester proposes Jane become his mistress rather than his wife, he longs for a "fraction of Samson's strength" (3.1.306), which words "thrilled along every nerve" Jane had (3.1.307).[33] Both lovers strain to keep their passion bridled. After his redemption through fire, Rochester is now a "sightless Samson," another Adam punished and purified for his unwise and ungoverned passion (3.11.436). In a curious aftermath to this allusion to Samson, Jane recalls another repentant sinner, Nebuchadnezzar, whose punishment is his transformation into a beast with long hair and nails. As a new, faithful version of Delilah, Jane suggests she will cut his "thick and long-uncut locks" in order to "re-humanize" him (3.11.441). This transformation is symbolic, in religious texts, of salvation and, in fairy tales, of the elimination of sexual anxiety

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her and her sons to go with him" (166).

[32] Significantly, Rochester, after the Thornfield fire, has a mark on his forehead and a maimed left hand (3.11.441, 436). By alluding to the mark of the beast, which according to the Bible is a mark on the right hand and forehead (Revelation 13: 16), Brontë suggests her Byronic hero is punished or marked for disrespect of the sacred.

[33] Compare Jane's earlier connection between Samson and Rochester. Rochester, here, thinks of Jane and feels a "thrill up my arm to my heart" (2.9.263). Later, her revenge against Rochester's tyranny is born out by her dark double, Bertha. Once Jane discovers her Samson's secret, his other wife, he loses his romantic tyranny over her.

towards the beast-lover.[34] For Jane, both meanings are relevant.

Jane's fear of her upcoming marriage becomes manifest in her dreams, in which she follows the "windings of an unknown road," carrying the burden of a child, too small and feeble to walk. In her first dream, her burden, like Christian's, hampers her movements, preventing her reaching or even calling out to Rochester (2.10.284). In her second dream, still burdened with the "unknown little child," she sees the ruins of Thornfield Hall. While wandering about the fragments of the hall, she still "must retain" her burden "however tired were my arms--however much its weight impeded my progress" (2.10.285). These dreams, pregnant with Jane's sexual anxiety and symbolic of her lost and fragmented self,[35] predict the fall of Thornfield Hall, another Babylon. In her prophetic dream, the ruined wall crumbles away from beneath her feet. The child rolls off her lap, eventually freeing her from its burden. Only after Thornfield, housing a number of impediments, is destroyed can Jane, finally

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[34] Bettelheim makes comparisons between the motifs in the Bible and in fairy tales. For instance, the number three, while representing the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity, also "makes for carnal knowledge" in both the Bible (snake, Eve, Adam) and in fairy tales (the Oedipal situation) (Bettelheim 219; also see 36, 53, 212 for other shared motifs). In "Beauty and the Beast," a tale of tabooed and permissive sex, Bettelheim explains that little girls are taught that only in marriage is sex acceptable. Since our mothers, often our first educators, prohibit sex outside of marriage, it is, fittingly, a female who turns the future bridegroom into a beast. Thus, only when he can find a beautiful virgin, one who listened to her mother's injunctions, will he finally be transformed into the handsome prince, hence a transformation of the tabooed into the permissible sex (Bettelheim 282-4).

[35] On her wedding day, the fragmented Jane cannot even recognise herself in the mirror: described like some religious novitiate or, at the other extreme, a veiled concubine in the Sultan's harem, she explains that "I saw a robed and veiled figure, so unlike my usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger" (2.11.289).

unburdened, return to Rochester.

In leaving Thornfield, Jane embarks on the most allegorical part of her journey. The outcast Jane quotes from the Psalms Brocklehurst is so fond of, signalling a departure from her free and passionate experience at Thornfield and a return to the religiously-narrow path and repression advocated by Brocklehurst and later by St John. When questioned by the Psalm-loving Brocklehurst, the young Jane remarks that "Psalms are not interesting" (1.4.33). Her reading up until this point has been of intrigue and the supernatural, working towards some resolution. The lack of narrative in the psalms probably underscores her youthful opinion of them and suggest the appeal narrative plots have for readers. Despite the emotional and passionate weight of the Psalms, the young Jane finds narrative a more congenial conduit for her passions. The parts of the Bible that Jane does find interesting are narratives emphasizing violence and struggle (Revelations, book of Daniel, Genesis, Samuel, Exodus, Kings, Chronicles, Job, and Jonah).

Later, Jane will find words in the Psalms to articulate her struggle. Interestingly, these words are also echoed in the narratives of Mark and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. When Jane calls out that "the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire: I felt no standing; I came into deep waters; the floods overflowed me" (2.11.299; see Psalms 69: 1-2), she echoes her pilgrim counterpart, Christian, who must cross the river of Death to reach the Celestial City: "I sink in deep Waters; the Billows go over my head, all his Waves go over me" (*P.P.* 161). Jane's supplication to God at this emotionally distressing time ("Be not far from me, for trouble is near:

there is none to help" [2.11.299; see Psalm 22:11]) also echoes Christ's lament to God: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring" (Psalm 22:1; also see Mark 15:34). Referring to the Psalms here, rather than when she was a child at Gateshead or Lowood, significantly contributes two aspects to her narrative. First, Jane wants to signify that at no time in her life was she as low as now. The consolatory laments to God in the Psalms signify the nadir of her existence; she cannot plumb the depths of despair any further. Second, the outcast Jane, alienated from man and God, quoting from the Psalms, prefigures Christ, who alone on the cross asks his God "why hast thou forsaken me?"

Unlike Christian's final crossing, Jane's survival of this little death leads her into an allegorical wilderness in which, after being dropped off at Whitcross, she comes closer to nature, her "universal mother" (3.2.327). The personification of nature, as in *Pilgrim's Progress*, suggests a closer contact with her environment, according to Michael Wheeler (38). To Jane comes a nurturing "Night" (3.2.328) but also a barren "Want": her "burden must be carried" (3.2.329). In *The Art of Allusion*, Michael Wheeler points out that the landscape she follows is specifically Bunyanesque (38-39). She travels to "cross-ways" and "by-paths" (3.2.334) before she sees the light at the edge of the moors. She needs to cross a "hill" and a "wide bog," follow a "road or track" (3.2.335) until she comes to the "wicket" (3.2.336).

While Jane confronts the alienating landscape, she also must bear the battle raging between her head and heart. Leaving Rochester, Jane describes her waking

conscience lecturing her now chastened passion for dipping "her dainty foot in the slough" (3.1.301), perhaps Jane's own slough of moral compromise. Later, when St John demands Jane's surrender, Jane describes her two still warring selves: Conscience and Reason battle against Feeling who still loves Rochester (3.1.321). In Volume III, Jane begins the penultimate stage of her spiritual journey, a regression to the Brocklehurst philosophy of self-mutilation. Bridging Brocklehurst's morbidity (his sermons against the desires of the flesh) to St John's eschatological predictions, Jane wishes to pluck out her own right eye and cut off her own right hand, a rejection of the evil parts in order to save the rest, advocated by Jesus Christ for, appropriately in this case, adulterers (see Matthew 5: 27-32 and Mark 9:43). Jane's metaphorical punishment stems from her own guilt in lusting after a married man. With St John, Jane finds her punishment. Described as a "cold cumbrous column" (3.8.397), St John, echoing Brocklehurst, exhorts Jane to "control the workings of inclination, and turn the bent of nature" (3.5.366). He admonishes her not to "cling so tenaciously to ties of the flesh" (3.8.395; also 3.9.419). A man cold to the heart, full of 'reason,' St John, whom she describes as the "warrior Greatheart" (1.12.457), will, ironically, convince Jane, by his presence, to return to the much warmer, passionate Rochester.

Jane's relationships with Rochester and St John accentuate some aspect of her warring personality. She supplements what each lacks. For instance, with Rochester, Jane maintains a moral control; she is his spiritual guide (1.14.138, 2.9.272). Jane also sees him as her equal, as he does her:

'It is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the

grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,--as we are!'

'As we are!' repeated Mr Rochester. (2.8.256)

He affirms their equality when he says "My bride is here . . . because my equal is here, and my likeness" (2.8.257). Later, however, Jane succumbs to Rochester's passion: "My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and, more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for his creature: of whom I made an idol" (2.9.277).

St John, on the other hand, wants to marry her in order to make her serve his wishes: "I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death" (3.8.411), a death for which she won't have long to wait under the Indian sun (3.8.409, 3.9.419). Jane's desire to please him means that she "must disown half my nature, stifle half my faculties, wrest my tastes from their original bent" (3.8.403). In other words, her emotional and passionate self has been shackled and imprisoned. She explains to St John that his words deprive her of feeling and paralyze her mind, now fettered in a "rayless dungeon." In images reminiscent of her imprisonment in the red room, Jane describes St John's heartless commandment as an "iron shroud contracted round" her (3.8.408). Whereas Mrs Reed, the archetypal evil step-mother, and Brocklehurst, the inhuman beast, are reduced to fairy tale images or, at best, characters from satire, St John is more threatening for he is the Christian missionary, the self-proclaimed emissary from God.

The Christianity St John espouses argues for a better life only after death, when

the faithful, happily bereft of their flesh, can reach their true spiritual home in Heaven. But Jane rejects St John's vision for her; she complicates and rewrites, as she has with other plots, her own 'Pilgrim's Progress.' She will not die with him in India. When she entreats Heaven to show her "the path," no God but Rochester's voice breaks the silence with her own name, "Jane," to bring her back to herself (3.9.424). Returning to Rochester, Jane hears of his equally Bunyanesque progress. Rochester ends his narration with his explanation for his fervent desire to die (3.11.452). Thus, both have suffered before reaching this new home at Ferndean. Ferndean, moreover, becomes a new Eden where Rochester, a chastened Adam, can find peace with his new Eve. Having been expelled from an old "Eden-like" garden (2.8.250) in which the ominous horse-chestnut split (2.8.259), warning of the Fall, Rochester at the end is still Adam with a "string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter" of Jane (2.8.254). Jane, describing their eventual union, suggests a post-lapsarian Eden, the new Jerusalem: "No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh" (3.12.456; also see Genesis 2: 23).

Jane rewrites the Christian story, making her "autobiography" a revised religious text, like Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Not only is Jane the new, redeemed Eve, but she is also the new, redeeming Christ figure struggling for victory. This elevates her life from the pagan fairy tale to the spiritual Christian tale. She even places her "autobiography" in parallel to the Bible, the last words of which she includes for her own conclusion. Unlike the apocalyptic ending envisioned by St John

Rivers and St John the divine, Jane's marriage and son point to another, more optimistic one. Her generative conclusion, a contrast to St John's suicidal spirituality and death, brings us to the point in Jane's life when she is ready to write her story for her "gentle reader" to read. Her own story will become the text by which we may rewrite our lives, to see, like Thackeray did after reading *Jane Eyre*, our own stories replicated in hers.

Chapter Five

The Blank Page: Maggie's Reading in *The Mill on the Floss*

"Madam! a circulating library in a town is, as an ever-green tree, of diabolical knowledge! --It blossoms through the year! --And depend on it, Mrs Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last."

Sir Anthony Absolute in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775), Act I, scene ii

In George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), the young Maggie Tulliver, like her predecessor Jane Eyre, reads for knowledge and to gain a sense of her place in the world, an integral aspect of who she is and who she is to become. Reading, essentially, is an important part of all these heroines' psychological lives, for they can create themselves as 'heroines' and signal their difference from the passively insignificant Lucy Deanes and the treacherously mercantile Blanche Ingrams of the world. Both Maggie and Jane want to create themselves as readers and in the process to let others, such as Riley or Jane's own "gentle reader," know they are reading heroines. Despite these similarities, it is precisely their approach to reading and their different contextualizations of their worlds that differentiate the romance from the tragedy. While the romanticised Jane Eyre remains relatively uncomplicated as a maligned victim resisting the plot assigned her, the tragic Maggie Tulliver complicates this paradigm by collapsing her critical distance from the texts she reads. Because Maggie's choice of reading changes and fluctuates, throughout the course of the novel, between novels and religious tracts and listening to musical arias and duets, we can chart her psychological history: her wonder at the world, her emotional hunger for purpose, and her intellectual search for the woman's elusive role in society. Despite

the patriarchal prohibition against reading, Maggie finds answers to her physical and emotional world. The answers she wants are to questions concerning the role of women. Throughout her reading life--from the picture books of her youth to the Latin grammars inherited from her brother's ill-conceived education to the religious texts and novels of her young womanhood--she finds the same answers and ultimately accepts the role she is cast in; as the dark-haired fallen woman, Maggie finds redemption in annihilating her self in the swollen, angry Floss.

When we first meet Maggie, she distances herself from her reading by rewriting and critically examining her world, as the older Jane has done in her autobiography. We are told that Maggie, disappointed with how her young life is turning out, refashions "her little world into just what she should like it to be" (Bk 1, ch 6, p 101). For inspiration she turns to books in which "there were people who were always agreeable or tender, and delighted to do things that made one happy, and who did not show their kindness by finding fault. The world outside the books was not a happy one" (3.5.319-20). But the "world outside," in the shape of Tom Tulliver, foils her attempts to construct a fantasy world. The unimaginative and narrow-minded Tom, an obvious representative of the St Ogg's mentality, refuses to see her fantasy world. While Maggie envisions Tom as Samson, fighting lions in defence of and out of love for his little sister, he frustrates her schemes by doggedly responding that lions only exist in shows in England and that he would use a gun rather than grapple with one single-handedly. The crushing blow to Maggie comes when Tom angrily exclaims that he does not love her (1.5.86-87). In another scene, Maggie entertains Lucy with

stories about Mrs Earwig fetching the doctor for her little one who fell into the washing copper, only to have Tom smash the earwig to show the unreality of her story. We are told more than once that "Tom had a profound contempt for this nonsense of Maggie's" (1.10.161; 2.3.237). But Tom's 'reality' has no more anchored hold on *terra firma* than the imaginative Maggie's fantasies (2.1.202). While still at Mr Stelling's, Tom, pirouetting in his military sword dance, describes himself as the Duke of Wellington to the fearful Maggie, who responds to his masculine role as he has dreamed (2.5.255). Tom would also have liked to be Hector, "the Tamer of horses" (5.2.406). Ironically, Tom will be inspired to go into mercantile battle for the mill to regain for himself his lost pride and respectability, instead of fighting over a woman as Hector did and as the younger Maggie had wished. Women play no role in Tom's fantasies.

Tom, who evolves into a symbol of patriarchal confinement of female education and achievement, continually reproaches Maggie for taking an active and participatory role in their family negotiations (4.3.381-19). He is the product of the separate spheres ideology as espoused by Riley and Stelling. Up against both men, Maggie wants to prove that she is an uncommonly intelligent child and should be allowed entrance into that mysterious world of masculine knowledge. Both confrontations underscore the patriarchal restrictions placed on female reading and education; by questioning these constraints, she early expresses her resistance. Maggie rejects the prescriptions of these educated men, coming up with her own reading and values, and in the process alienating herself from this male domain rather than being

allowed entrance into it.

Maggie, like Jane, early introduced with a book in her hand, wants to impress Mr Riley, the auctioneer whose early acquaintance with Latin had "ceased to be distinctly recognizable as classical" (1.3.75), with her knowledge and reading, because she accurately suspects he does not think anything of her and mistakenly assumes he would respect her if she could discuss something from her books. Significantly, she chooses an illustration from the 1819 edition of Daniel Defoe's *The Political History of the Devil* (1726) depicting a witch's trial by water, a picture that predicts Maggie's fate. If she drowns, she is just a "poor silly old woman"; but if she lives, she is a witch, who will eventually be put to death through some other means. (Refer to Appendix 2 for the wood-engraving from the 1819 edition of *The History of The Devil*.) Maggie, who will later become identified with witches and witchcraft, questions the justice of this trial. Her questions show her understanding of Defoe's satire. Riley, who pretends to know more on most subjects than he really does (1.3.75), judges Defoe's book solely on Maggie's description of this engraving. to avoid being exposed by a young girl, he retreats to his position of authority, stating in a "patronising tone" that *The History of the Devil* is "not quite the right book for a little girl" (1.3.67). He encourages her to read the allegorical *Pilgrim's Progress* instead. But Maggie questions his preference, since both are books primarily about the devil and his various guises (1.3.68). Riley relies on the ellipsis and omissions of his authoritative statements to maintain his respected posture as a man of knowledge. Maggie's wish to penetrate and invade these vague spaces is a threat to his superficial

position. Ironically, Defoe's thesis questions and eventually ridicules narrow-minded Biblical literalists, the very sort that populate St Ogg's, a healthy contrast to what Bunyan intended. Not surprisingly, the dominant message, introduced in this scene, is that a woman "allays at her book" will "turn to trouble" and "learn more mischief" (1.3.66, 68).

In Maggie's second confrontation with a narrow-minded man, she is expected to accept that women are incapable of learning Latin. And if Maggie could learn Latin and become a "clever woman," everybody would "hate" her (2.1.216), an illogical judgement that recalls society's punishment of witches, other women who dared to be different. When Maggie suggests to Tom tha' she could learn Latin from the *Eton Grammar*, an icon of gentlemanly achievement, he retorts that "girls can't do Euclid" (2.1.220). The conceited Mr Stelling, the epitome of a stereotypical gentleman's education, concurs: "They've a great deal of superficial cleverness: but they couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow" (2.1.220-21). But it is Maggie, not Stelling, who can provide her mentally challenged brother with a "dim understanding of the fact that there had once been people upon the earth who were so fortunate as to know Latin without learning it through the medium of the *Eton Grammar*" (2.1.221). These "people upon the earth" would have included women, mothers, daughters and sisters, whose 'mother' tongue would have been Latin. But now Latin is no longer spoken, having become a dead language only available and regulated by the *Eton Grammar*. Maggie, who reads so she can tell stories (2.3.237), skips the "rules in the Syntax" in exchange for the sentences about strange beasts with

horns, more interesting fare for her imagination (2.1.217). Instead of memorizing by rote a dead language, written for no living speaker, Maggie searches "deep into the examples" (2.1.220) for the living, peopled, spoken language.[1] But at every attempt Maggie makes to speak the language, Tom warns her not to tell him (2.1.218) or to quit her chatter (2.1.219). When Stelling humiliates her, she has "no spirit for retort" (2.1.221). She is left speechless. She learns to answer her own question about why the astronomer hated women: women with their "talk" might hinder the scholar in his high tower from looking at the stars (2.1.220).[2] Eventually, Maggie succumbs to the men of maxims who "are guided in their moral judgment solely by general rules" (7.2.628). Tom, ironically, remains as uncomfortable with Latin "as if he had been plied with cheese in order to remedy a gastric weakness which prevented him from digesting it" (2.1.208), while Maggie, "with her soul's hunger" for "masculine

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[1] Compare Maggie's yearning for life to her aunts' obsessions with death. Aunt Pullet bemoans wearing dark mourning and not her colourful hats, perhaps before she dies from an overdose from her physic. Aunt Glegg is concerned about properly written wills and death rituals, and Mrs Tulliver loses her boxed china well before she can will them to her son. Aunt Deane, whose presence is never really felt, is the first sister to die.

[2] I am indebted to Dr Isobel Grundy for bringing to my attention the allusion to Johnson's insane astronomer in *Rasselas*. While Maggie stumbles with her question, eventually answering it with the stock misogynist's phrase of women's babble, George Eliot provides another voice and another answer. The astronomer in *Rasselas*, thinking he can control the planets, has become insane from prolonged study and no amusement. Although this mad astronomer has never received visits from women before (XLVI), he makes an exception in Pekuah's case. She initially speaks learnedly to him about the stars, but soon the conversation returns to more worldly and domestic concerns. Eventually, through conversation with a woman, the astronomer's sanity returns. Stelling, who undoubtedly has memorized his *Eton Grammar*, inadvertently shows his ignorance of Johnson when he does not answer Maggie's question.

wisdom," is allowed only a "nibble at this thick-rinded fruit of the tree of knowledge, filling her vacant hours with Latin, geometry, and the forms of the syllogism" (4.3.380).[3]

As Maggie becomes removed from the socially more valued work and achievement of men, the novel devotes less time to Tom's accomplishments and more to the inner world of Maggie (4.2.367). Her contemplations and dilemmas fill the pages and bring us closer to understanding her rather than Tom. Thus, Maggie's life becomes important to the reader. As a reader herself, Maggie relies more frequently on books, her "opium," to get her through her "troublous life" (1.6.101). Through the books she reads and the legends she is familiar with, Maggie is increasingly compared to subjects from legend, fiction, and history.

Flowing from the concluding fatal flood, criticism has drawn on Maggie's identification with the drowning witch from Defoe's *Political History of the Devil* and with the Virgin crossing the river from the St Ogg's legend to underscore the only options available to her. She must be either a Madonna or a fallen Magdalene. The reader, prepared for this last disaster of the flood, is inundated with prophesies and foreshadowings of her imminent downfall and drowning.[4] In the first sentence of the

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[3] Refer to Mary Jacobus, "Men of Maxims and *The Mill on the Floss*" for her discussion of the possibility of a feminist language that slides across meaning.

[4] Curiously, George Eliot thought "the tragedy is not adequately prepared. This is a defect which I felt even while writing the third volume" (qtd Bennett 229). She is not clear how she could have prepared the reader more. However, in a letter to her publisher, Blackwood, dated 1 May 1857, she explains her views of novelistic endings: "Conclusions are the weak point of most authors, but some of the fault lies in the very nature of a conclusion, which is at best a negation" (*Letters* II.324). Significantly,

novel, the narrator describes the Floss hurrying to the sea, whose "loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its passage with an impetuous embrace" (1.1.53). This portrait of the reunited waters anticipates the final embrace between brother and sister (7.5.655). This flood, rippling through literary criticism, has nourished various interpretations to Maggie's doomed character. Some critics have read the flood as an artistically flawed *deus ex machina* that has no place in a 'realistic' novel.[5] Others see it as an appropriate "final rescue" for Maggie, who has been confined by society (Beer, "Beyond Determinism" 88). If we read the flood as a release, then Maggie can be seen as a being trapped in a degraded form in which society cannot recognise her true nature (Adam 134), a metaphor also supported by Mr Tulliver, who early suggests that "one mustn't judge [a book] by th' outside" (1.3.67). A tidal wave of excess that overwhelms the typical 'fallen' heroine's normal early exit to the grave (Corinne) or to the nunnery (Flora MacIvor), Maggie's death is the only possible ending, some argue, for a woman denied knowledge and with no meaningful role in society (Boumelha 29).

Maggie's role in society owes much to the restrictions placed on her by the Bible, the word of the Father, both figuratively and literally. When Mr Tulliver opens his Bible, one of the few items not sold in the auction (3.8.348), he does not read of forgiveness or self-sacrifice. Instead he reads a ledger of the deaths in his family (3.8.349). In this family register, containing the word of the Father and the Son, Mr Tulliver sees his own writing and will demand that his son Tom also record his oath to

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since this novel is Maggie's biography, its conclusion must also be hers.

[5] See Leavis 244, Bennett 230.

revenge his father against lawyer Wakem (3.9.356-57). This tome, like the forbidden *Eton Grammar*, represents the masculine word, choking Maggie "with fear" (3.9.357) and leaving her speechless (6.4.500). Her brother forces Maggie to promise, with hand placed on the Bible, never to speak or to write to Philip Wakem again (5.5.446). In this instance, Maggie is inundated with laws. On the Bible, the law of the Father, she must swear allegiance to her father's law against communication with any one belonging to Lawyer Wakem, another agent of patriarchal law.

The Bible also produces the two polarities most commonly associated with Maggie. Some critics read Maggie as incarnating the devil or witch (Auerbach, Barrett), while others read her as a Madonna, saint, spirit, or martyr (Beer, Welsh, Wiesenfarth, Wolff). Some identify her with other figures from the other fiction Maggie reads. She is the rebelling heroine, the dark-haired 'other', Hecuba, or Antigone (Beer, Booth). Equally insistent are the critics who read Maggie as Mary Ann Evans (Leavis, Prentis, Woolf).[6]

Still, some have read this split between the angelic virgin and the wicked witch as an example of the clash between duty and compulsion, and society and self, represented in her adherence and resistance to the dictates of St Ogg's (Kucich, Prentis, Stone). According to Deirdre David, "Maggie Tulliver's provocative death cancels the

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[6] There are serious problems with reading *The Mill on the Floss* as autobiography for it cancels the author's imagination and creativity. Often, reducing the heroine to the author avoids examining her fictional character any further. I could also argue that George Eliot is as much a Philip Wakem, an ugly artist who just wants to be loved (5.1.403) and whose solitary figure closes the novel ("Conclusion" 656), as she is the heroine.

immutable autonomy of the contending political views she metaphorically embodies, and . . . liberates her from a form in which she seems to have no home" (6.14.601). Thus, her death or the liberation of her soul, once confined by the narrowness of St Ogg's commercial culture, recalls Philip's suggestion that she reminded him of a princess imprisoned in the form of an animal (2.5.253). Maggie herself often imagines that she is the queen in "Lucy's form" (1.7.117). The flood reunites not only brother and sister but also Maggie's fragmented soul.

I will argue that Maggie is a combination of all the figures she reads about. Her personality "is made up of many different threads, which inevitably produce internal conflict" (Kucich 137). She is both the witch whose drowning frees her from such imputations and the "virgin" whose pregnant condition initially places her in a precarious position. Both the witch and the virgin are imprisoned by the double bind. Similarly, Maggie returns to St Ogg's a virgin but cast in the role of the fallen woman. She is the witch who bewitches Stephen but who loses agency, like a "silly old woman," in the drift down the river. Her eyes that flash an "almost feverish brilliancy" when thinking about Stephen (6.3.494) recall Maggie's description of the devil Tom coloured in *Pilgrim's Progress*: "the eyes red, like fire, because he's all fire inside, and it shines out at his eyes" (1.3.68). While critics have pointed to the dialectical tension between self and society exhibited by Maggie's various representations between devil and angel, I will examine Maggie's fluctuations in reading.

At first, Maggie maintains a critical distance from the text that she is reading,

allowing her space to question the witch's death in Defoe and to reject the sad fate awaiting dark-haired heroines in de Staël and Scott. Later, after coming across Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, Maggie begins to lose this distance, becoming a reader who is passive and submissive, adjectives describing the feminine. To be feminine, according to this religious paradigm, is to read uncritically and unquestioningly, like a readerly reader, to accept the word of the Father as law. Even her mother notices this change in Maggie's "inward life": "it was amazing that this once 'contrairy' child was become so submissive, so backward to assert her own will" (4.3.387). Maggie does not imaginatively transform her world, as do Arabella (*The Female Quixote*) and Isabel (*The Doctor's Wife*) or rewrite it, as does Jane (*Jane Eyre*). Despite her ascetic wishes, Maggie submits her "abundant black locks" to her mother for plaiting and adorning. And she also passively accepts Philip's request for secrecy, clearly not an action advocated by à Kempis. Paradoxically, Maggie is so passive, she cannot actively accept the role of the ascetic. Maggie's last reading scene, in which she reiterates others' words, prefigures her own succumbing death in the Floss (Homans 581).

Even as a young child reading her picture books, Maggie is identified with sexually aware women, the Eves and Magdalenes who extend their knowledge and, hence, sexuality beyond the limits prescribed by the law of the father. Maggie's transgression is apparent in her focus on the gaps or spaces produced by the texts she reads. She searches for answers to the meaning in these, to use Roland Barthes' term, "erotic" gaps to the "body" of the text (*Pleasure* 9). Like Eve before her, Maggie

hungers for the fruit from the tree of knowledge, whose produce yields women's knowledge of their own gaps and spaces. Each text Maggie devours will still produce more omissions, preventing her from satisfying her hunger for answers, for knowledge. Reading, therefore, becomes an addiction.

Mr Tulliver listens to his daughter's prattle, with a "petrifying wonder," and prophesies that she will "learn more mischief . . . wi' the books." But had she been "the lad" she would have been "a match for the lawyers, *she* would" (1.3.67, 68 italics in text). Maggie's interest in the old woman's trial by water goes beyond her identification with witchcraft and sexually deviant women. Maggie wants to know what the text does not say. What good does it do the old woman, she asks, if she proves not to be a witch, since her innocence requires her death? Mr Tulliver's diagnosis of his daughter's reading is accurate. Maggie, by questioning the rightness of the law of the father, is a "match" to the authority who arrests, judges, and convicts the "silly old woman" whose crime is her difference. For an answer to her question, Maggie appeals to a higher authority, to the holy Father. "I suppose she'd go to heaven, and God would make it up to her" (1.3.66-67). With more wishful imagination than conviction, Maggie wants redemption for the old woman who dies and for Maggie who will displease most every one around her. Thus, in the gaps or spaces, Maggie looks for forgiveness and for grace, virtues alien to and clearly forbidden by Tom. Around her father and her brother, Maggie often finds herself in a state of "disgrace" for reading books about devils (1.3.68) or for meeting Philip, her supplier of books, in the sexually suggestive Red Deeps (5.5.450).

Maggie's search for redemption from both the father and the brother leads her naturally to identification with the biblical "Prodigal Son" whose picture she sees in a book (1.4.83). Maggie, thinking about Tom's dead rabbits awaiting his return, feels "more than usual pity for the career" of the sinful son, whose "defective moral character" is finally forgiven when he returns repentant to the house of his father (see St Luke 15: 11-32). She is "very glad" that the father takes him back again but is bothered by the "blank" left by the "subsequent history of the young man" (1.4.83). While Maggie had earlier filled the blank or space left by the picture of the drowning woman, she leaves blank the young sinner's "subsequent history." Her close identification with the prodigal son does not provide her with the critical distance to write the young man's conclusion. She knows her father will take her back and forgive her her sins.[7] She does not know, however, what reaction she will receive from her brother. Because the Bible does not fill the gaps of whether the older brother becomes reconciled to the younger, Maggie's life will be the writing in the "blank." And the blank will not be filled with forgiveness or redemption. When Maggie asks her dying father to "forgive every one now," Mr Tulliver refuses with an answer implying that not even God forgives "raskills" (5.7.464). Tom refuses the repentant Maggie a home, telling her instead that "the sight of you is hateful to me" (7.1.614). Even Maggie's final resource for redemption, Dr Kenn, the parish minister,

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[7] Both Maggie and her father are prodigals in St Ogg's. Although once he pays back his creditors, Mr Tulliver is eventually forgiven for his continually running to Law and for his bankruptcy, Maggie will never be forgiven, by her society, for bankrupting her sexual capital, a non-renewable asset.

may secretly forgive her, but he cannot publicly offer her the fatted calf (7.5.645-46). St Ogg's society, noted for "turning their backs upon her" (7.4.637), is symbolically responsible for her death in the Floss, for it is St Ogg's machinery that both overtakes and consumes their boat: "Huge fragments, clinging together in fatal fellowship, made one wide mass across the stream" (7.5.655). For Maggie, as well as for the drowning woman in Defoe's picture, redemption exists only in some other world.

Maggie's reading of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* encourages us to view her passing in the river Floss as a sign of salvation, as it is for Christian who passes through the river of Death before he can reach the Gate to the Celestial City (Bunyan 161, 163). Maggie early makes the connection between Christiana passing "the river over which there is no bridge" and the river Floss (1.5.94; see *P.P.* 161). Like Christian and Christiana, Maggie begins her journey with recognition of her sins. Initially, Maggie's problems stem from her own compulsive tendencies. She accidentally kills Tom's rabbits, wilfully pushes Lucy into the mud, cuts off her own hair, and runs away to join the gypsies, an exercise that provides her with "haunting images of Apollyon" (171). The books she reads act like mirrors reflecting her own image. The fire burning from the devil's eyes, coloured in her copy of *Pilgrim's Progress* (1.3.68), is later recalled in Maggie's "dark eyes" that "flash out with new fire" (1.4.80).

The chapters and book titles in *The Mill on the Floss* reflect an allegorical journey similar to that in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Maggie passes through the "golden gates," having been expelled from her Garden of Eden (chapter 7), a romantic

recollection of her childhood that has replaced the real thorns with imaginary blossoms. Her early childhood books, Defoe and Bunyan, have been sold at the auction (3.6.325). Her journey takes her through the "thorny wilderness" (2.7.270) to "The Downfall" (Bk 3) and "The Valley of Humiliation" (Bk 4), the two books comprising the centre of the novel. Here, the maturing Maggie finds that Tom's battered Latin school-books "give her no fortitude" against fearing for her father "doing something irretrievably disgraceful" (4.3.373).

Bob Jakin, reviving the art of "chivalry," saves Maggie from this 'dead' language when he brings her books (4.3.374, 382).[8] From his selection, Maggie, embarking on her second phase, her renunciation, chooses three books, "the Bible, Thomas-à-Kempis, and the 'Christian Year'" to be her constant companions. Renouncing her "vain ambition to share the thoughts of the wise" (4.3.387), for which she thought she would hold the "secrets of life" (4.3.379), she discards Virgil, Euclid, and Aldrich. She has found these "old books," her fruit from the tree of knowledge, to be "wrinkled" (4.3.387). She has already discovered that "the relation between Aldrich and this living world was extremely remote" (4.3.380). In these new books, she finds a "secret of life that would enable her to renounce all other secrets--here was a sublime height to be reached without the help of outward things--here was insight, and strength, and conquest, to be won by means entirely within her own soul" (4.3.383-

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[8] According to Wiesenfarth, the comic Jakin or "little Jack" is a descendent of the folkloric Jacks. He looks after his widowed mother by his wits. He "proves himself shrewd" by outwitting a wealthy wife and "enjoys being relatively disreputable" (Wiesenfarth 119).

84).

Ironically, Maggie exchanges her lifeless, "thirsty, trackless" Latin texts (4.3.380) for religious tracts that encourage her to deny herself, to repudiate who she is, her identity. She picks up Thomas à Kempis's *Of the Imitation of Christ*, a medieval text which was first translated into English from the original Latin in 1677. Maggie discovers in Kempis's little book "some hand, now for ever quiet," that has marked particular passages with "strong pen and ink marks" (4.3.382). This "quiet hand," Maggie's Greatheart, becomes her guide to *Of the Imitation of Christ*, pointing to where she should read. She is not conscious of her reading. Instead, she feels rather than understands the words on the page: "A strange thrill of awe passed through Maggie while she read, as if she had been awakened in the night by a strain of solemn music, telling of beings whose souls had been astir while hers was in stupor" (4.3.383). Her lack of understanding and consciousness will later dominate Book VI, but here only anticipates Maggie's surfeit of emotional sensations she experiences when she meets the musical Stephen with his equally "low voice."

Ironically, the physical pleasure Maggie feels in reading the "quiet hand" and hearing the "low voice" seems to contradict the message of à Kempis to renounce the pleasures of this world: "'Know that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than anything else in the world . . . . to enjoy thy own will and pleasure thou shalt never be quiet nor free from care'" (4.3.382) and "Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and . . . . Then shall all vain imaginations, evil perturbations, and superfluous cares fly away" (4.3.383). The "secret to life" appears to be death. As a symbol of her renunciation

of self, she refuses to "look at herself in the glass" (4.3.388). She also refuses to read other books than these three religious texts. The image of the self, either reflected in the mirror or in her reading, is clearly being erased. In *The Secular Scripture: a Study of the Structure of the Romance*, Frye explains that the mirror (or variations of this image in paintings, sculptures, tapestries--and one could add books) is a reflecting pool providing an entrance into romance and fantasy (Frye 108, 109). In this case, Maggie's denial of her image, in opposition to romance, does not bring her any closer to understanding her place in the world. Moreover, her pursuit of beneficence produces the opposite. For instance, Maggie's selfless attempts to comfort her father make him sadder, because his misfortunes have "damaged her chance in *life*" (4.3.388, italics mine). Nina Auerbach, in her discussion of Maggie's demonism, points out that "whatever Thomas à Kempis' doctrine may be in itself, it becomes in Maggie's hands another 'fetish' that explodes communities and blights lives" (Auerbach 245).

Philip's entrance into Maggie's ascetic sphere, after years apart, disrupts her scheme to renounce gratifications in life. With Philip appearing outside her window, she even allows herself thoughts of "other dreams that savoured of seeking her own will" (5.1.392). Looking towards the "square looking-glass which was condemned to hang with its face towards the wall," she begins to reach for it but stops herself in time (5.1.392). It takes Philip to show her a miniature he painted to bring back the old Maggie: "Maggie saw her old self leaning on a table, with her black locks hanging down behind her ears, looking into space with strange, dreamy eyes" (5.1.395). Their clandestine meetings in the Red Deeps mark another stage in

Maggie's progress. Philip argues against Maggie's doctrines of abstinence. She has given up questioning her life or the gaps left by texts, for she contends that "our life is determined for us--and it makes the mind very free when we give up wishing and only think of bearing what is laid upon us and doing what is given us to do" (5.1.397). Maggie, influenced by Thomas à Kempis and the quiet hand, has become a passive reader. Philip Wakem, whose name implies his function for Maggie, alerts her to the danger of losing whatever grasp she has on life. He asserts that "we can never give up longing and wishing while we are thoroughly alive." He encourages Maggie to "hunger" after what she feels to be "beautiful and good" (5.1.397). Why, he asks, should she "starve" her mind? (5.1.402).

Maggie had at one time thought she could be content with all of Scott's novels and all of Byron's poems for "[s]aints and martyrs had never interested Maggie so much as sages and poets" (4.3.379). Now, Philip brings her books, the forbidden fruit, for nourishment because he remembers her fondness for them when she was a young girl. This literary sustenance must be taken in secret because their meetings are trespassing against the law of both fathers (5.1.396-397, 400, 403; 5.3.425). The first book he brings, Scott's *The Pirate* (1821), she explains she never finished. She tried to finish the story in her "own head" but could not see a happy ending for Minna after she commits herself to Cleveland, the pirate (5.1.401; see *The Pirate*, ch. 22). While Philip suggests she finish the volume now, Maggie has already been absorbed by Scott's novel. She shakes herself free of the intoxicating words on the page and returns the volume, explaining that reading novels would only make her "in love with

this world again . . . it would make me long to see and know many things--it would make me long for a full life" (5.1.402).

The romantic scene in *The Pirate* between Minna Troil and Clement Cleveland, where Maggie stops reading, deserves some comment, perhaps to throw light on Maggie's doomed relationship with Philip. Minna Troil and Maggie Tulliver have more than their initials in common. These tragic heroines are physically and emotionally similar and have a need to read romance into the gaps in stories. Minna, with raven locks and "dark eyes," is grave and serious in contrast to her fair-haired sister, Brenda, a stock literary contrast, who is often less intriguing but more marriageable than her dark-haired counterpart (ch. 3). Dark-eyed Maggie is early marked as an outcast, whose difference is either demonic or saintly. Although Minna is not identified as either, we are told that she belongs to "some higher and better sphere" and is "only the chance visitant of a world that [is] not worthy of her" (ch. 3, 34). By the end of *The Mill on the Floss*, this description of Minna could equally apply to Maggie, since we recognise that Maggie is morally superior to the other St Ogg's inhabitants.

Like Maggie and Philip, Minna and Cleveland have been meeting more than once at the Cavern of Swartaster, one of the loneliest recesses of the coast (ch. 22, 269). On the last walk, Cleveland tells Minna the story of his life, his adventures as a buccaneer, and his mysterious past. Minna, in contrast to her docile sister, has an "unusual intensity of imagination" and delights "in every tale of wonder." Moreover, she is "more willing to admit impressions which gave her fancy scope and exercise"

(ch. 19, 229). Thus, Minna creates stories for the gaps left in Cleveland's autobiography. She interprets his life as one filled with "gallant deeds," and she responds with a "heart . . . like that of a maiden of the ancient days" (ch. 22, 276). Minna, betrothing herself to Cleveland, inspires his amazement at her high courage intermixed with ignorance of the world. Maggie stops here; she cannot read any further, and so she creates her own imaginative endings to this gap or space left in her reading.[9] Maggie's endings are all unhappy; yet not satisfied with these, she wonders what the "real end" is for poor Minna (5.1.401).

Like the previous heroines already discussed (Arabella, Isabel, and Jane), Maggie is a reflection of what she reads. Wanting to know the "real end" is for Maggie wanting to know what position a dark-haired, singular woman might hold in society. Like Maggie, Minna graduates from the Magdalene to the Madonna figure. Often associated with the wild Shetland landscape and weather, Minna sympathizes and believes in the resident witch, her kinswoman, Norna of the Fitful Head.[10] By the end of the novel, Minna, bereft of lover, becomes a selfless, comforting saint, another Madonna figure. When she dies an old woman, the villagers place her "a little lower

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[9] The ability to imagine that Minna and Maggie share appears to be a necessary attribute for a heroine. Curiously, F.R. Leavis, in his condescending attack on George Eliot in his dated definition of *The Great Tradition* (1948), is disturbed by her "satisfaction" gained from "imaginative participation in exalted enthusiasms" (243). One wonders how dangerous "imaginative participation" can be for either an author or a heroine?

[10] Maggie Tulliver and Norna is each called a "pythoness" (*Mill* 1.4.79, *Pirate* ch. 6.75, 78, 80), a Greek term associated with Apollo's Delphic oracle. Since the pythoness, possessed by some god or spirit, speaks another's words, there is a suggestion that the woman has lost agency.

than the angels" (ch 42, 502). That Maggie cannot create a happy ending is not surprising since it is clear Minna and Brenda must follow the literary patterns assigned dark- and fair-haired heroines. Forever cast as the literary virgin, Minna cannot marry because her fair foil will. For single women, like Norna, the witch, and Minna, the saint, few occupations are available.

Clearly, by the time Philip offers Maggie *The Pirate* she has tried but has given up on writing her own conclusions to the unfinished novel. The more mature Maggie has learned to accept literary conventions. In the chapter entitled "Another Love Scene," perhaps mirroring the numerous love scenes in de Staël's novel, Maggie explains to Philip why she couldn't finish *Corinne, or Italy*, by Madame de Staël, published in 1807. Maggie, a good reader, foresees that Lucile Edgermond will marry Oswald, Lord Nelvil. Maggie threatens never to read any more books "where the blond haired women carry away all the happiness" (5.4.433). In de Staël's novel, Corinne, noted for her "lively imagination" (*Corinne*, Bk 4, Ch 6, P 75), is a national Italian icon of art and beauty; she is a poet-improvisatrice and sibyl. Corinne, by these talents, has gained fame and glory as well as wealth. Because of its reverence and admiration for the dark-haired heroine, Roman society is exalted and praised. Although this novel is not so much a praise of Italy as a disguised attack on Napoleon's France, de Staël, who lived some time in England, ensures that the English are well represented. Not only does the unscrupulous Nelvil forsake Corinne to marry her blond, insipid, English half-sister, but also "the whole of paternal authority condemned her love" (*Corinne* 17.9.357). Moreover, Corinne suggests that convents

are more lively than a group of English women at tea (*Corinne* 14.1.256), a comment borne out in Maggie's world by the staid Dodson sisters. Corinne has earned herself a venerated place in society but has lost a potential husband, Nelvil, who felt overshadowed by her star.

As an improvisatrice, Corinne is always writing the gaps. She extrapolates ideas from her past to insert in the present. She invites the reader to become creative also, to investigate hidden possibilities just as she has done. We are told that "in novels, the best things are usually hidden" (*Corinne* 3.3.46). Corinne too must hide her feelings for Nelvil, whose "reserve and austerity" forbid her natural inclination to reveal everything (4.6.73). De Staël buries the turbulent relationship between the independent Corinne and the male chauvinist Nelvil under a tour guide of Rome. Rather than examining the depths of Corinne's feelings for Nelvil, much of this novel is devoted to Italian architecture (Book 5 "Tombs, Churches, and Palaces"), people and culture (Book 6 "Italian Character and Customs"), and art (Book 7 "Italian Literature" and Book 8 "Statues and Paintings"). Ironically, Corinne, who learns to omit vital information to both Nelvil and the reader, fills in the text with her disconnected improvisations--"Corinne's Improvisation at the Capitol" (2.3.26-31), "Fragments of Corinne's Thoughts" (18.5.369-373), and "Corinne's Last Song" (20.5.415-417). Instead of explaining to Nelvil who she is, she has mastered "the high-speed art of light talk that dwells on nothing" (7.2.118).

In contrast, the mature Maggie is more aware of the spaces in texts but feels helpless to suggest some alternative plot. Although her alternatives for Minna in *The*

Pirate were all unhappy, perhaps based on her readings of Defoe and Bunyan, at least then she provided endings. Now, she is no longer interested in filling the gaps. She accepts the literary tradition: the silly old woman drowns, the dark-haired Minna expires a virginal saint, and the betrayed Corinne dies broken-hearted. Maggie refuses to read another book in which the dark heroines are made "miserable" by the blond ones. Instead of rewriting the stories as Jane Eyre does, Maggie wants Philip, her "tutor," to provide the missing plot: "If you could give me some story, now, where the dark woman triumphs, it would restore the balance--I want to avenge Rebecca and Flora MacIvor, and Minna and all the rest of the dark unhappy ones" (5.4.433).

At this stage of her novel reading career, Maggie experiences her first love scene with Philip in the Red Deeps, an episode she has not expected but which determines the direction the plot will take her. She has never expected to be the heroine with the lover: "It seemed so far off--like a dream--only like one of the stories one imagines" (5.4.435). She has already read herself as the dark "unhappy" one who loses the man and forever remains, in the tragedy, the obligatory virgin. She accepts the plots assigned women: their place is to be buried in prescribed endings. She will not, however, alter the literary tradition by avenging the dark unhappy ones with a happy ending with Philip. When Tom obstructs this new plot, just as he had done when they were younger, Maggie finds the "forced separation from Philip" a "relief." The final sentence explaining Maggie's feelings is intentionally ambiguous to suggest another explanation: "Surely it was only because the sense of a deliverance

from concealment was welcome at any cost?" (5.5.451).[11] Although Maggie is fond of Philip as a brother, he is no hero. A cripple, Philip is already marginalized and feminized, often described with womanly attributes (5.3.431; 5.4.438; 6.7.537; 6.8.543). Maggie wants to avenge the dark-haired heroines by being loved by a handsome hero, possibly by her fair-haired cousin's lover.

Maggie foresees that she will follow the path set by predetermined literary tradition, another inscrutable law that decides her fate. Following the confrontation with her brother, she expects more "struggle," perhaps, she says, "more falling" (5.5.451). The dark-haired heroine will forever play the fallen woman, the Magdalene, who is forsaken but who finds peace in selfless acts. The witch, Minna, Corinne: the plot is written. After she predicts her falling, her path leads her to the Deanes where she will walk down their garden path to her perdition, perhaps an expected literary closure to this period in her life begun with "A Duet in Paradise" (6.1.469).

Maggie's prolonged visit at the Deanes' marks another stage in her history. She moves away from the books associated with the first two periods of her life: learning Latin in her childhood with Tom and reading novels in her youth with Philip. In this, her third period, she embraces music. Volume III is dominated by the baritone Stephen Guest, a minstrel who worms his way into Maggie's heart, and who "replaces

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[11] The narrator has more than once intimated that we should dig deep into the blanks and gaps as Maggie has done when a child. For instance, the narrator, in the satiric style of a Defoe, earlier suggested that Tom's anger at Maggie's deception is not purely motivated by his duty as a son and as a brother: "Tom was not given to inquire subtly into his own motives . . . he was quite sure that his own motives as well as actions were good, else he would have had nothing to do with them" (5.5.446).

Tom and displaces Philip Wakem as the male protagonist" (Gray 15). The switch from Tom to Philip to Stephen encourages us to read these men as metaphors defining and influencing Maggie's character. If with Tom the rebellious Maggie questions and tries to answer the spaces in the text, and if with Philip she is still unhappy with the plots assigned women but is unable to rewrite the tragedies, she is here with Stephen beguiled and consumed by the music she hears. Unlike her earlier self when she actively reads and questions the books, here she passively listens to the music.

Of all the volumes, Volume III approaches the closest to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in that it is an allegory of Maggie's moral struggle, although played out, in operatic fashion, in song. Maggie's struggle, no longer mirrored only in a written text, is vocalized in the more artificial musical form that she listens to. Although she appears always to be the audience to the various combinations of singers, she becomes one of the central characters in the drama alluded to in their songs. Music, then, operates on two levels. First, it allows us to see Maggie as an emotional, passionate, and sympathetic being, bewitched by the music into giving in to her desires. Paradoxically, this yielding, albeit to the sensual rather than to the spiritual, accomplishes just what Thomas à Kempis and the "quiet hand" have urged. Maggie gives in to the erotic only to lose herself, to negate her identity. Second, the operatic stories (synopses provided in appendices) contribute to the depth of our understanding of Maggie's situation in *The Mill on the Floss*. The allusions to other texts highlight thematic and structural links.

The chapter "A Duet in Paradise," an *accelerando* of the two interwoven sound

and paradise motifs, recalls earlier references to gardens and sound. Early, the narrator, invoking a fond memory of the pastures and hedgerows from an idyllic past, remembers the rush of the water and the booming of the mill as "like a great curtain of sound, shutting one out from the world beyond" (1.1.54). As a child, Maggie becomes entranced by the "fairy tune" coming from her Uncle Pullet's music box: "for the first time she quite forgot that she had a load on her mind" (1.9.154). Later, Maggie, in the Edenic Red Deeps, suffers under the conflict between duty to her father and brother and pleasure for herself. She hears two voices: one expresses an "urgent monotonous warning" and the other a "sweet music" that "would swell out again, like chimes borne onward by a recurrent breeze" (5.1.399). She tells Philip, during one of their illicit and secretive meetings, that she always "wanted more instruments playing together--I wanted voices to be fuller and deeper" (5.3.428). Music, at least for Maggie, acts like a sedative dulling the pain and wafting her to another world, shut off from the cares of this one. In the book "The Great Temptation," music plays to Maggie's senses rather than to her intellect; she feels rather than thinks: "Maggie only felt that life was revealing something quite new to her, and she was absorbed in the direct, immediate experience, without any energy left for taking account of it, and reasoning about it" (6.6.516).[12]

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[12] In *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, Catherine Clément examines opera, written and controlled by men, from a woman's point of view. She suggests that in opera the words, if one can understand the language, give rise to meaning, but the music speaks to our passions: "Consequently, the less one hears the words, the greater the pleasure" (Clément 21). She continues, comparing the forgetting of words of the libretto (in fact, we more often forget the librettist's name, which is subsumed under the composer's) to the forgetting of women (22). When she does read the texts, she is

The first chapter, privileging music, introduces the trivial delights[13] of Lucy Deane and Stephen Guest, singing in and about this garden of innocence. Stephen suggests that he and Lucy sing the "Graceful Consort" from Haydn's oratorio *The Creation*. To Lucy's Eve, Stephen will sing the part of Adam. And into Lucy's garden steps Maggie who is a 'guest' to this paradise. In this paradigm, Maggie, the serpent, destroys the bliss between this Adam and Eve. Lucy, truly the prelapsarian Eve, innocently draws the comparison between Maggie and disguised sorcery: "I can't think what witchery it is in you, Maggie, that makes you look best in shabby clothes" (6.2.480); and Maggie's knowledge, she says, "always seemed to me witchcraft before" (6.3.498; also refer to Auerbach 241).

We should not forget, however, that Stephen is also a 'guest' in Lucy's protected and serene world. When asked to be his Eve in the duet, Lucy suggests that his part would not suit his voice, a naturally deeper one. He ignores her point and continues to hum "in falsetto," an artificially high voice (6.1.474). Thus, Stephen's "falsetto" introduces the theme of musical falsity. He will pretend to be Lucy's Adam while attempting to seduce her cousin; he will also play Philip's friend while becoming his rival. In constructing Philip as his antagonist, Stephen alludes to Philip, with his "indifferent" voice, as "the fallen Adam" (6.1.474)--a comparison between the two

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horrified to find the "words that killed, words that told every time of women's undoing" (22). Under the seductive charm of melody, music makes us forget the suffering and agony of expiring maidens. For Maggie, her seduction and undoing is no different.

[13] It has been noted that this scene recalls Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* with its trivial actions, busy scissors, and indulged spaniel (see Gray 19).

Adams highlighted in Philip's deformity and Stephen's assumed perfection as the prelapsarian Adam. According to Beryl Gray, in *George Eliot and Music*, Adam's voice, in Haydn's "Graceful Consort," is generally higher than Raphael's lower aria (Gray 25), a point Lucy makes when she suggests the part of Raphael suits Stephen better: "You do the 'heavy beasts' to perfection" (6.1.475). Stephen, however, is less morally suitable as the angel. He sings Raphael's part out of order, and he scares god's creation, Minny the dog, as if it was the Judgment day and not the day of Creation. Not surprisingly, Lucy refers to Philip's claim that *The Creation* is a "sort of sugared complacency and flattering make-believe" (6.1.474), a censure that highlights the trivial and false romance between Lucy, the "linnet-throated soprano," and Stephen, "the full-toned bass" (6.1.475).

In this musical world, Maggie has graduated from her austere to her sensually excessive stage. She will partake of a "riotous feast" of music (6.2.483) which draws out of her "excessive feeling" (6.2.486). Her "highly strung, hungry nature" seems to feed on Stephen's "vibratory . . . voice" (6.3.494). In this sexually charged atmosphere (Purcell's music, with its "wild passion and fancy," is "vibrating in her still"), Stephen conjures up for Maggie "images from all the poetry and romance she had ever read" (6.3.495). Maggie, in this romance, experiences a sensory overload: her enjoyment is unchecked by "soft-breathing airs and garden scents of advancing Spring, amidst the new abundance of music, and lingering strolls in the sunshine and delicious dreaminess of gliding on the river" (6.6.513). Even the oars dipping in the river have a "rhythmic movement" that attracts her (6.2.491).

Captivated by "fuller and deeper" voices (5.3.428), Maggie finds nothing sensually attractive in the misshapen Philip or his "high, feeble voice" (6.7.528). Philip's voice, "pitched in rather a higher key" (6.7.525) echoing not "very fine qualities," is not quite new to her. She recalls his singing "in a subdued way among the grassy walks and hollows" (6.7.533). Then, the younger Philip, describing his voice as "middling," first sings to her *sotto voce* the part of Acis in John Gay's *Acis and Galatea* (1732), an opera with music by Handel. Acis, son of a river-nymph and the lover of the sea-nymph Galatea, is turned into the river that bears his name after being killed by his jealous rival, the Cyclops Polyphemus. Gray, in her examination of the operas George Eliot uses in the novel, explains that the cyclops would be sung in bass, a part that Stephen, with his naturally deeper voice, will fill in displacing the less masculine Philip (Gray 31). The aria that Philip sings expresses his sensuous longing for Maggie:

> Love in her Eyes sits playing,
> And sheds delicious Death;
> Love on her Lips is straying,
> And warbling in her Breath.
> Love on her Breast sits panting
> And swells with soft Desire;
> No Grace, no Charm is wanting,
> To set the Heart a-fire. (Gay 270)

As with her unfinished reading, Maggie will not let Philip complete his song because

she fears it will "haunt" her (5.3.428). His song to her seems to be a reply to the melody mechanically emitted from Uncle Pullet's music box that charmed Maggie years before. The aria from "Hush, ye pretty warbling Quire" expresses Galatea's suppressed longing for her Acis:

> Hush, ye pretty warbling Quire!
> Your thrilling Strains
> Awake my Pains,
> And kindle fierce Desire.
> Cease your Song, and take your Flight,
> Bring back my Acis to my Sight. (Gay 269)

This song, while it reflects the effect that music has on Maggie, does not, during this early scene at her Uncle Pullet's, reflect any sensual desires for Philip. Although the desire Acis has for Galatea mirrors Philip's for Maggie, one cannot say the same about Maggie for her Acis / Philip, who is often pictured as 'womanly' with his "small-featured face . . . turned up to" Maggie's (5.3.426).

In competition with her new acquaintance Stephen, Philip intentionally wishes Maggie to remember their youthful walks in the Red Deeps. He, therefore, sings "I love thee still" from Bellini's opera *Sonnambula*, first produced in 1831. (See Appendix 3.1 for a synopsis of this opera.) He explains that the opera is about a tenor telling the "heroine that he shall always love her though she may forsake him." Maggie understands his "plaintive . . . pleading tenor" (6.7.525). The opera *Sonnambula* (The Sleepwalker) is not so much about the tenor as it is about its

heroine, whose tendency to sleepwalk places her in precarious situations. The parallels between *Sonnambula*, an opera in two acts, and *The Mill on the Floss*, a novel in three acts, becomes more relevant in their very different conclusions. Philip's Elvino does not initially believe in the innocence of his betrothed, Amina, despite her and Rodolfo's protestations of it. However, Amina redeems herself only when on the brink of falling into the waterwheel at the mill during one of her sleepwalking trances. That Amina can only prove her innocence by linking it to her possible death (if she falls into the waterwheel) hints of the witch's own trial in the water and suggests the great value placed on sexual innocence. Once she is proven innocent, Amina awakes in Elvino's arms in time to sing her half of the closing duet of love. Like Amina and despite Stephen's letter asserting her innocence, Maggie too will be unjustly accused of indiscretions. Maggie's final duet, however, ends not in marriage but in death. The arms that clasp Maggie after her trance-like experience in Book Six, "The Great Temptation," are not her lover's but her brother's.

Maggie finds Stephen, a fine specimen of masculine physique, more attractive than the smaller, more feminine Philip. Stephen's voice has inspired Maggie to live again: "Life seems to go on without effort, when I am filled with music" (6.3.496). Music is a more "pregnant, passionate language to her" (6.6.514) and dulls her thoughts of the past: she "began to be less haunted by her sad memories . . . . Life was certainly very pleasant just now." Music has an "intoxicating effect," inspiring in her a "delicious dreaminess" (6.6.513). Stephen, conscious of how much his singing means to Maggie, manipulates the arrangements so that he can see Maggie while his

melodious voice breaks down her resistance: "her soul was being played on in this way by the inexorable power of sound. You might have seen the slightest perceptible quivering through her whole frame, as she leaned a little forward, clasping her hands as if to steady herself" (6.7.532). Stephen, through his music, will attempt to undermine her virtue, her memory of the past, and her moral code. He is clearly no longer Adam but the serpent in this harmonious garden. While Maggie hungers after music, Stephen, betrothed to Lucy, lusts after Maggie "as a thirsty man looks towards the track of the distant brook" (6.6.521). He sings to Lucy "in pianissimo falsetto," a quiet but high voice that would not attract the notice of her cousin, but his words, "The thirst that from the soul doth rise, / Doth ask a drink divine," are intended for Maggie (6.13.584).[14]

Lucy inadvertently, one could say almost because of her sole role as the betrayed in the novel, places Stephen in the part of betrayer. Observing the tension between the two friends, she wants to take advantage of the presence of both Philip and Stephen and have them offer up their voices to Maggie to charm her back to life again. She suggests they sing the duet in Auber's *Masaniello* (1828), which she claims "will suit" Maggie (6.7.531). (See Appendix 3.2 for the synopsis of this opera.) Philip sings Masaniello's part, a tenor, while Stephen sings his friend, Pietro, a baritone. Lucy has chosen the parts well, for just as Pietro will deceive his friend Masaniello, Stephen will also betray his friend Philip. And Maggie, never a singer but always the audience, is the 'dumb' Fenella.

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[14] Ben Jonson's "To Celia."

The friends' duet begins with a rousing declaration to engage in battle against the persecuting Spanish; but when it "passes into the minor," the vocalization arouses Maggie half out of her seat (6.7.532). According to Gray, it is at this point in the duet, when the music darkens in tone, that the brother explains that his sister has been raped and that he will kill the perpetrator once found (Gray 46). The duet, promoting their shared purpose against the Spanish at the beginning of the opera, is later transformed into opposition and betrayal when Pietro murders his friend. Masaniello, the ideal brother, will sing his dishonoured and cast-off sister to sleep, "offering her both the fraternal protection and the sanctuary for her bruised soul that Tom is later to deny Maggie, and which Philip--the ideal brother of Maggie's imagination--is prevented by his own feelings from giving her" (Gray 47). The irony of the situation in the Deanes' drawing room is that both Philip and Maggie are enjoying the singing. Philip, unaware that Stephen will poison his dreams of Maggie, finds relief in music and brightens at Lucy's suggestion to sing the duet. Unaware of both the plot of the opera and Stephen's role in her own downfall, Maggie finds Stephen's "deep" voice "very pleasant to hear" (6.7.531).

That the opera is named both for the sister, "The Dumb Girl of Portici," and for the brother, "Masaniello," emphasizes their central relationship to this personal, moral drama rather than to the political, background setting of the Neapolitan revolt of 1647. Fenella, like Maggie, is the moral indicator. She forgives Alphonso for abducting and seducing her and chooses to die with her brother. Masaniello's assassination and Fenella's suicide at the end of the opera, like Tom's and Maggie's

immolation, highlights that "in their death they were not divided" (*Mill*, "Conclusion" 657), a theme that George Eliot ingeniously returns to by introducing this operatic intertext without requiring Tom's presence at this point in the plot.

George Eliot not only shadows the brother and sister connection in this last opera, but also reminds us that the bonds of the past are stronger than those of the present. Similarly, Michael Balfe's *The Maid of Artois* (refer to Appendix 3.3 for story outline), the music of which Stephen uses as a pretext to see Maggie alone, highlights various aspects of Maggie's history. First, *The Maid of Artois*, according to Sullivan in "Music and Musical Allusion in *The Mill on the Floss*," includes a soprano-tenor-bass love triangle which parallels crudely the Maggie-Philip-Stephen trio (2.4.245). The early ties forged between Maggie and Philip, like those between Isoline and Jules, only become stronger over time. The soprano, Isoline, like Maggie, suffers imputations of infidelity, as a result of her thinking of others' welfare, particularly that of her incredulous Jules, before her own. Had Maggie thought of herself, the "world's wife" would have judged the affair as "quite romantic" rather than scandalous (7.2.620).

This scene of Stephen's proffering his music encapsulates the cumulative effect he has on Maggie. His influence, experienced sensually through his music, induces a state of dreaminess in her. She loses the ability to make conscious decisions; an automaton, she loses her self. The "sound" of Stephen's footstep first alerts Maggie to his approach from "the garden as if he had come straight from the river" (6.6.518). Stephen's association with both the river and the garden connect him to these two

insistent sexual metaphors.[15] Although this scene emphasizes his sexual attractiveness, it also suggests his moral inadequacy as Maggie's lover. When he first appears, Maggie becomes confused (6.6.518) before entering a dream state (6.6.519). This is momentarily dispersed by Stephen's mention of "Philip," a name that has "become a sort of outward conscience to her" (6.7.525). But even the sound of Philip's name has not the potency to awaken Maggie a second time (6.6.521). She returns to the "same dim dreamy state" (6.6.521), which is only broken when Stephen ironically cautions her about taking, literally, a wrong "step." At this point, she awakes, asking "how came she to be there?--why had she come out?" (6.6.522), questions that she will later ask at the apt-named Mudport after her long, slow glide down the river (6.13.589-590). The irony of this situation becomes apparent when linked to *The Maid of Artois*, an opera promoting memory which Stephen, gliding down the river, attempts to negate.

Maggie's memory, her commitment to the past, forces her to return willingly to St Ogg's where she, like Defoe's witch, will be tried and condemned with the same action. Maggie's forgetfulness while at the Deanes' contributes to her fall.[16] The two aspects of the biblical fall, the sensual and the intellectual transgressions, are played out in Maggie's relationship to Stephen, with his seductive music that overpowers and

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[15] That Stephen is a metaphor is not disputed. However, some critics, such as the contemporary Leslie Stephen, see him as an unfortunate "hairdresser's block" serving no useful purpose (qtd Leavis 241). Other more modern critics give Stephen his full due, suggesting that he represents "Philistinism and sexual vitality" to perfection (Barrett 62).

[16] Mr Deane is the spokesman of the amorphous commercial presence, Guest & Company, which produces both Stephen and the wooden machinery that overtakes and destroys Maggie (7.5.655).

fills her, and Philip, with his unfinished books. She can marry neither since it would mean a sacrifice of her self, her identity, and ultimately her history as represented in her childhood memories. Maggie argues that if "the past is not to *bind* us, where can *duty* lie? We should have no *law* but the inclination of the moment" (6.14.601-602, italics mine). Maggie earlier insists to Philip she would "desire no future that will break the ties of the past." She persists, saying "that book [the past] never will be closed" (6.10.564). The language Eliot uses to describe Maggie's moral dilemma connects the law of the past to books (albeit the metaphorical 'book of life') from which Maggie looks for meaning.

Maggie's dilemma has always been finding a place between extremes. On one side, she has to contend with the Law of the Father which lies in duty as expounded by Thomas à Kempis and his "little old," yet powerful, book. On the other, she has desires and passions that seem to be quenched only by Stephen and his music. A battle of voices in her head competes for her allegiance. She is torn between the "low voice" she hears in à Kempis (4.4.383; 7.5.648) and Stephen's letter from which his "voice shook her with its old strange power" and commands her to write him (7.5.647-48).

Maggie is "always in extremes" (6.4.503). Looking at her, we are told, there is a sense of "opposing elements, of which a fierce collision is imminent" (5.1.394). Maggie is both "dangerous and unmanageable" and "very tender and affectionate" (6.8.545). Like a witch with her charm, she hammers nails into her doll's head, but like a merciful Madonna, she befriends the misshapen Philip and loves the selfish

Tom. She pushes Lucy into the mud, but at Mudport, she returns Stephen back to her cousin. For Maggie, there seems nothing in between, only gaps and blanks separating the Magdalenes from the Madonnas. Maggie has spent her short, turbulent life looking in these blanks for answers to possible roles, for she believes that there is happiness and meaning for women there.[17] The narrator tells us that "the happiest women . . . have no history" (6.3.494). Their lives are blanks, like the subsequent history of the prodigal son. If Maggie lived between these extremes, where she is neither devil nor angel, "her life would have had so few vicissitudes that it could hardly have been written" (6.3.494).

This focus on the type of women who have their lives written brings us closer to Eliot's use of the flood, which the patronizing Leavis said had "no symbolic or metaphorical value" (2.4.244). Far from having no symbolic value, the flood is an accumulation of all that Maggie has read. It is the biblical flood washing away the mercantile selfishness inherent in Tom (his narrowness is widened to include "awe and humiliation" [7.5.654]) it is the river through which Bunyan's Christian and Christiana must pass before reaching their home (Maggie's cry "O God, where am I? Which is

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[17] I believe that George Eliot, like her Maggie, was also looking for the heroine who is an every day woman, whose blank Eliot intended to fill: "Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was constant unfolding of her far-resonant action" (*Middlemarch*, "Prelude" 3). She wrote about women, the St Theresas and the harlots, searching for some meaning to their existence: "Here and there a cygnet is reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond, and never finds the living stream in fellowship with its own oary-footed kind. Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centring in some long-recognisable deed" ("Prelude" 4).

the way home?" [7.5.651] echoes Christian's confusion when he first enters the river); it is the water associated with both the oft-cited witch who drowns and the virgin who crosses the river. Maggie, ending her struggles in this flood, is reminiscent of Minna Troil, the dark unhappy one, who we are told is worth too much to belong to the mundane. Maggie, like the virgin crossing the river, is too good for the people of St Ogg's. Finally, the flood culminates in Maggie mythologizing her own past, perhaps her way of rewriting her life to be that of one of the happy ones whose history we will never read.

Maggie's own ending is foreshadowed in the dream she has on the boat to Mudport about the virgin and St Ogg on the river. Here Maggie's dream begins very realistically. She and Stephen are in a boat when she sees something bright approaching. She initially thinks it is the virgin and St Ogg. As her eyes become more focussed, she sees that Lucy and Philip have replaced the legendary figures. Then Philip becomes Tom, who unlike the legendary merciful St Ogg, does not stop for Maggie, who by now is wanting passage with the boatman. In this dream, as in Maggie's life, her position shifts from observer to participant. She is no longer the reader but the heroine; she is the virgin trying to catch the boatman's (Tom's) attention. In the end, her attempts to reach Tom cause her own boat to capsize (6.14.596). This dream, which paradoxically opens the chapter titled "Waking," is very vivid. The closer she comes to recognising the passengers in the other boat, the closer she approaches and recognises her own death. After she awakes from this "confused web of dreams" (6.14.596), we are told that her "conscience is awake" (6.14.602) and that

she begins "to see" (7.12.625). While she approaches her own death, her imagination of the state of things becomes more and more vivid (7.5.652). The more clearly Maggie and Tom see their world, the more symbolic and dream-like the ending becomes.

Curiously, Maggie "in one supreme moment" just before she and Tom go under recalls "the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together" (655). I suspect that Maggie is here recalling one of those lives that would have filled those empty gaps and blanks left by the text. The happy women with no histories may have enjoyed hand-holding and daisied fields, just as she had hoped that the witch would have found salvation in heaven. But those stories are not written. Maggie's past, like those of her forebears, the dark unhappy ones, is not filled with these happy events. Instead, she mythologizes her past, creating a pastoral fiction truly in accordance with the dream-inducing operas she has heard. Maggie's own rewriting of her past, a sort of negation of the truth, seems a desperate bid to fill the gaps.

Maggie's disappearance in the flood is a metaphor for her inability to find answers for the blanks in women's lives. Although St Ogg's remains silent on this point, the not-said is she would be 'better off dead' than return unmarried. Her death in the flood, a leap into the void she has spent her life fathoming, answers St Ogg's silent wish. Her tragic death is in some way an attempt to close the gap between what we feel safe to say and what we cannot mention.

Epilogue

> And said the most prudent Cide Hamete to his pen: 'Here you shall rest, hanging from this rack by this copper wire, my goose-quill. Whether you are well or ill cut I know not, but you shall live long ages there, unless presumptuous and rascally historians take you down to profane you. But before they approach you, warn them as best you are able. . . . 'For me alone Don Quixote was born and I for him. His was the power of action, mine of writing.'
>
> Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, Part II, ch. 74, p. 939-940.

For my epilogue, I thought it appropriate to borrow the final words of Cervantes' fictional Cide Hamete Benengeli to his pen and ultimately to his reader. I have suggested that heroines who read are structured on the Quixote archetype. Over the span of two centuries, this figure has undergone various permutations, eventually becoming the visionary or the artist who has the power to imagine new worlds. The fictional historian of Quixote's adventures, however, has warned any "rascally historians" not to touch his pen. He fears his "history" will become the property of later writers, who will take his romance-history and make it their own. Cide Hamete's warning articulates three fears. First, he anticipates that future writers will abscond with his pen. Second, he, like countless imitators later, defends his romance as a "history." And finally, he fears that he will lose control of his creation if it does become the property of other writers' imaginations.

Future writers of romance have certainly absconded with his goose-quill. The story of the romantic visionary has been feminized, repeated, and altered. The figure of the Quixote is well suited to reader-heroines, who satisfy, paradoxically, both the reviewers wanting to see parodies of silly women and women-readers wanting to have

their own reading practices affirmed with the appropriate reward. Women, in particular, have been associated with the romance since the fictional Benengeli laid down his pen. Romances have been written by women for women. Looking for this locus of female companionship, Arabella, in *the Female Quixote*, speaks and writes the emotionally charged and excessive language of romance.

Since women romance writers have been disparaged and denigrated as scribblers of fancy and fluff, there is a need to validate the romance genre. Arabella does this unconsciously by referring to Scudéry's romances as "histories," just as Cide Hamete refers to his romance as a "History."[1] And Isabel Sleaford reads her *Dombey and Son* for writing examples to use in her "real" situation. By calling his imitators "rascally historians," the fictional Cide Hamete suggests that the imitations will be just as historical as his own. The idea that romance can be interpreted as history is not new. In 1621, five years after Part Two of *Don Quixote* was published, Lady Mary Wroth wrote her own romance, *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania*. This disguised history, a *roman à clef*, caused such an uproar, especially when some courtiers and ladies recognised themselves, that she had to withdraw it from the market. In the nineteenth century, authors argued that their fictions were snapshots of reality. Writers who could imitate their world accurately were praised, while others who brought forth types or caricatures were less successful with the discriminating critic. Both Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot argued effectively that their portraits

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[1] Also see Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740*, particularly his chapter on "Romance, Antiromance, True History" (52-64).

were realistic.

Finally, Cide Hamete enunciates a proprietary anxiety over his text, a fear that many writers may experience once their "offsprings" leave their possession: they lose control of the interpretation after it has been read. The four heroines I examine all have active imaginations, seeing themselves reflected in the books they read. They interpret their reading as resources to construct their identity. In the two *Bildungsromane*, Jane and Maggie are influenced by what they read. Their lives take on a mythical, fictional aspect, transforming them both into heroines. Jane Eyre must reject the view others have of her in order to maintain her own identity and perspective of the world. Having read *Pamela* and "Cinderella," she has rewritten these plots to make them her own, separate and distinct from the originals. Jane has the imaginative capacity to envision herself as the rescuing prince, not as the passive, imprisoned princess.

Women's imaginations, particularly when encouraged by reading romances, becomes a threat to men, who, like authors, cannot control the result. Traditionally, it has been argued, that man has the faculty of reason while woman has the imagination and emotion. This dichotomy gets translated in terms of gender and genre: women read emotional and highly imaginative romances while men read about real life. It is hard to see these terms side by side without valuing one over the other. Elizabeth Barrett Browning mocks this judgement by raising the imagination to heroic heights. Thus, she laments, in *Aurora Leigh*, that the "world's male chivalry has perished out," but she admires, especially in her heroic artist, the imaginative powers of woman:

"But women are knights-errant to the last" (E.B. Browning 7:224-27). Another defender of the romance, Hawthorne praises the complexity of the genre: it is "woven of so humble a texture" but, by this seeming advantage, it is "the more difficult of attainment" (Hawthorne, "Preface," *The House of the Seven Gables*).

The imaginative capacity in all four heroines allows them the scope to see beyond their limited boundaries. Arabella's imagination tests the hero, proving he is the right man for her to marry. Isabel, without the hindrance of her masculine tutors, can imagine a place where her poets lived. Jane imagines and rewrites her own singular identity based on the books of her youth. Initially Maggie reads with a curiosity similar to that of the other heroines examined in this study. Maggie, however, succumbs to the tragic plots she reads or is told because she loses the ability to rewrite stories. Her death suggests the importance of women's interpretations of the fictions they read to reclaim their identities. Maggie's inability to read the endings to various romances suggests that her own conclusion will also end in a void. Maggie's death, like Quixote's before her, suggests that the imagination is a creative force in self-construction.

Appendix 1

Tail-pieces from Bewick's *History of British Birds*

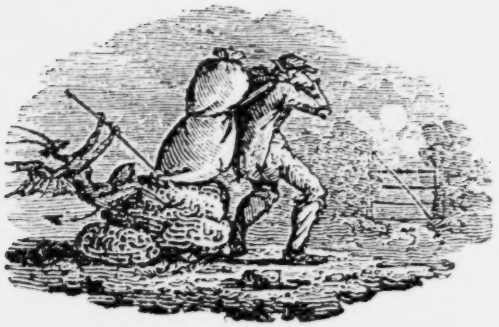


Figure 1 (Volume 1, Page 183)

Figure 2 (Volume 1, Page 99)

Figure 3 (Volume 1, Page 45)

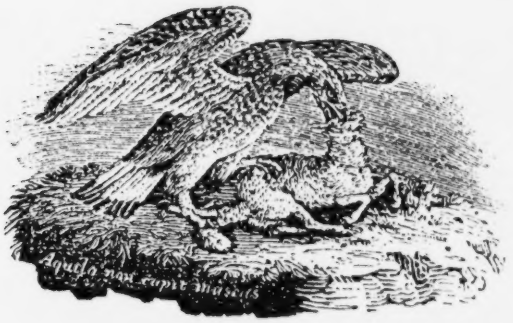


Figure 4 (Volume 1, Page 2)

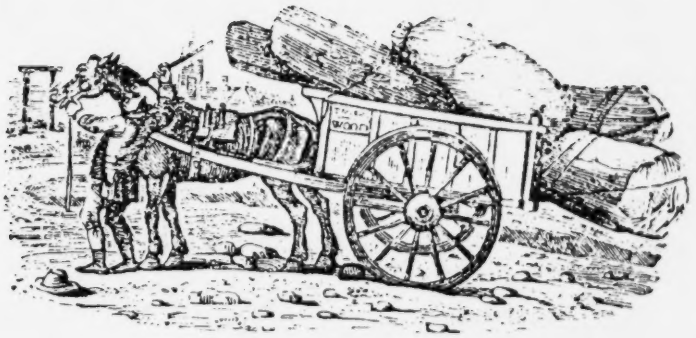


Figure 5 (Volume 1, Page 252)

Figure 6 (Volume 1, Page 135)

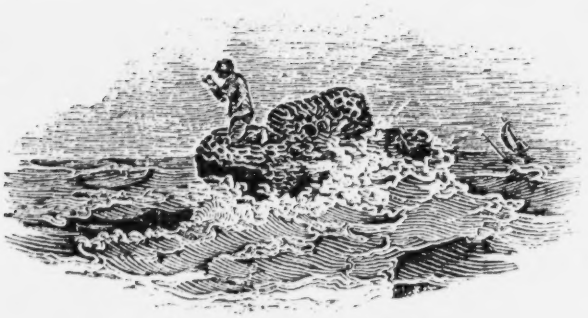


Figure 7 (Volume 2, Page 180)

Figure 8 (Volume 1, Page 340)

Figure 9 (Volume 1, Page 376)

Figure 10 (Volume 2, Page 355)

Figure 11 (Volume 2, Page 202)

Figure 12 (Volume 1, Page 10)

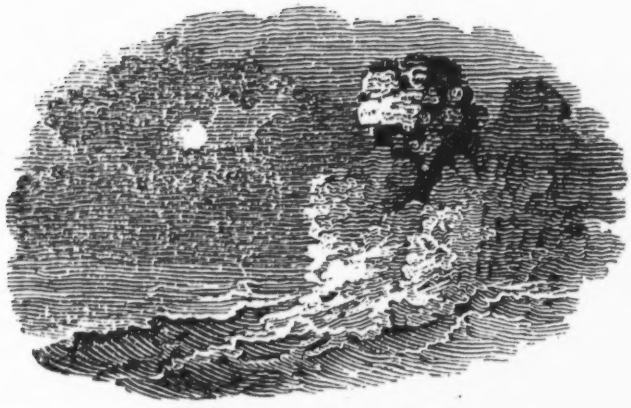


Figure 13 (Volume 2, Page 109)

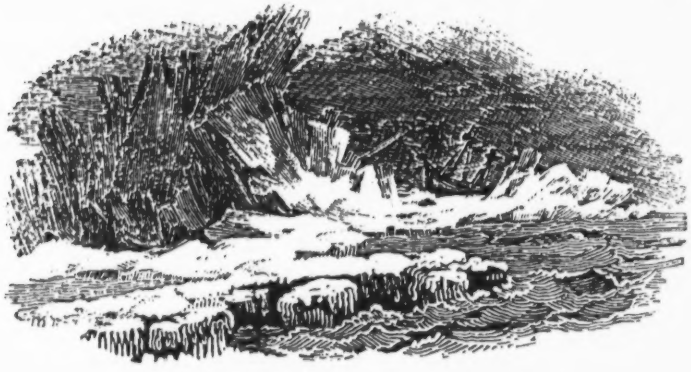


Figure 14 (Volume 2, Page 196)

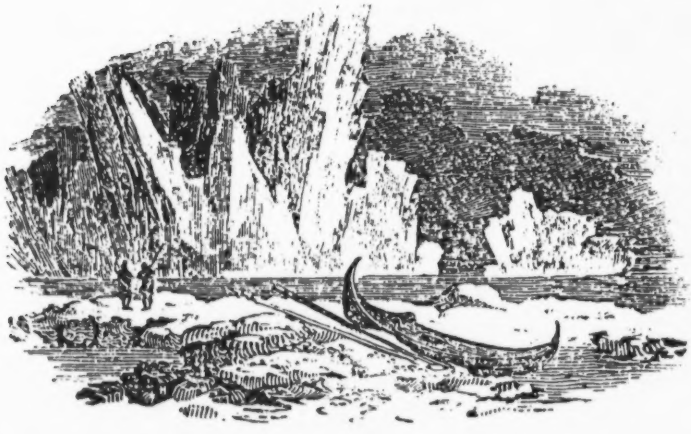


Figure 15 (Volume 2, Page 171)

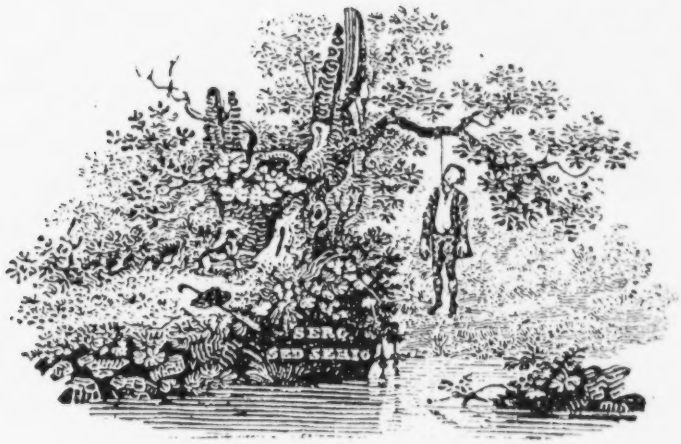


Figure 16 (Volume 1, Page 57)

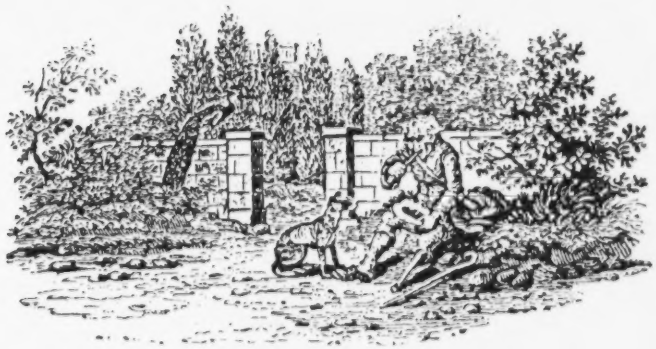
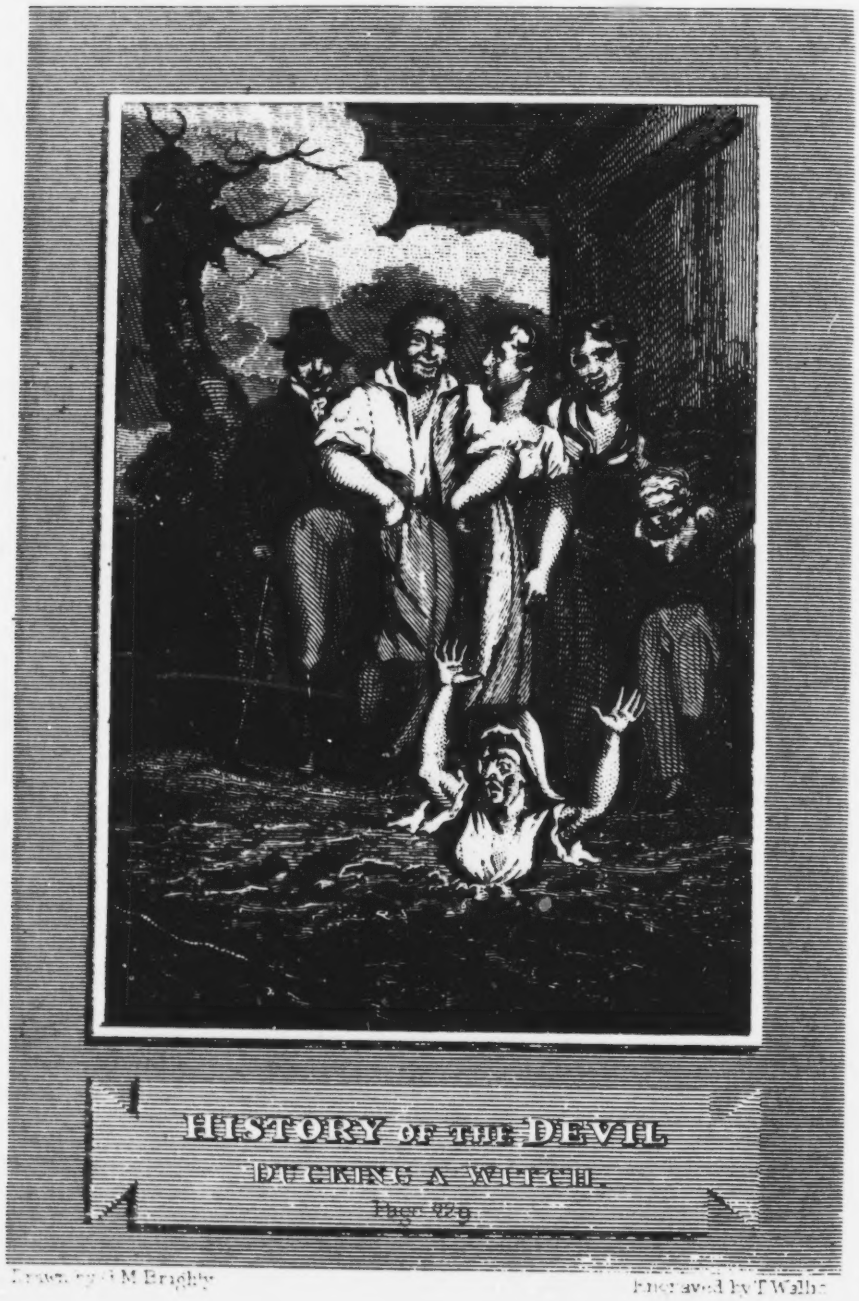


Figure 17 (Volume 1, Page 331)

Figure 18 (Volume 2, Page 234)

Appendix 2

"Ducking a Witch" from *The History of the Devil* (1819 edition)



Appendix 3

Synopses of Operas

1. Vincenzo Bellini, *La Sonnambula* (The Sleepwalker) (1831)

This opera, based on the book by Giuseppe Felice Romani and set among the Swiss Alps, recounts the problems a young country girl, raised at a mill, encounters because of her sleepwalking affliction.

Amina, the sleepwalker, is betrothed to Elvino, a rich landowner, who has earlier spurned the advances of Lisa, the mistress of the Inn. One evening, in one of her somnambulistic trances, she enters the room of the disguised and wealthy Rodolfo, who is entertaining his hostess, Lisa, in his bedroom at the inn. Although a ne'er-do-well, the chivalrous Rodolfo leaves the room to his sleeping visitor. Lisa, however, wants to win back Elvino to whom she lets it be known that Amina has compromised herself with Rodolfo. Elvino believes his bride-to-be has been unfaithful because Rodolfo had earlier showered her with attention. When Amina wakes up, Elvino is on the scene to seize the engagement ring off her finger and to pronounce his intention to marry Lisa instead.

Various attempts to clear her name, such as Rodolfo's insistence that she was sleepwalking, are unheeded by Elvino. However, two pieces of circumstantial evidence support Rodolfo's claim. First, Lisa's handkerchief is found in Rodolfo's room, and second, Amina in a trance walks across the frail plank over the water wheel of her guardian's mill. Elvino, observing her sleepwalking, is waiting breathless to catch her on the other side of the plank. She awakes in his arms. (For more information, refer to *The Metropolitan Book of the Opera* 16-18.)

2. Daniel François Auber, *Masaniello* (*La Muette de Portici*) (1828)

Based on the book by Eugène Scribe, this opera is set against the Neapolitan revolt of 1647 against the Spanish authorities.

Fenella, a dumb girl of Naples, who had been earlier abducted, confronts her seducer, Alphonso, son of a Spanish viceroy, soon after his marriage to Elvira. Shamed, Fenella is on the point of jumping into the sea when she is saved by her fisherman brother, Masaniello. Masaniello, a tenor, and his friend Pietro, a baritone, swear to fight until they can overthrow their Spanish oppressors and avenge their dishonour. The rebellion begins when Fenella is rescued by fishermen from being re-imprisoned by Alphonso's father. During the subsequent melee, Alphonso and Elvira seek refuge with Masaniello, who, unaware of his guest's perfidy, yields to his forgiving sister's entreaties to save Alphonso.

After the successful revolution, Masaniello earns the ire of Pietro for having shielded the enemy and for refusing to become the new fisherman king. Pietro, who had earlier sung in unison with his brother-at-arms, now in discord poisons him. Just before being killed by his own men, Masaniello revives long enough to fight heroically. Fenella, distraught by her dear brother's murder, has enough time to bless her contrite seducer and his new wife before committing suicide by leaping into the stream of lava erupting from Vesuvius.

(For more information, refer to both Gray 46-47 and *The Metropolitan Book of the Opera* 7-9.)

3. Michael William Balfe, *The Maid of Artois* (1836)

The melodramatic plot (the text by A. Bunn) is constructed around "the plight of a pair of sundered lovers." Jules, a destitute and grieving tenor, searches through Paris for his beloved Isoline who he believes is faithless. In Act I, Isoline, far from being faithless, has been held by a dishonourable marquis who offers her station and fortune. Meanwhile, Jules is ensnared by a 'friend,' suitably named Sans Regret, who, by pretending to lend money to the penniless Jules, has him sign a receipt which is actually an enlistment form.

Isoline, upon hearing about her lover's enlistment, calls out to her memory to hold onto the "wreckage" of her past happiness:

> The heart that once had fondly teem'd
> With hopes, which it the fondest deem'd
> Should keep them treasur'd, gem by gem
> For love to deck its diadem!
> For the first springs of feelings drawn
> When our beliefs are in their dawn,
> Before the nipping touch of care
> Hath press'd his icy fingers there.
> They are so pure, that in the range
> Of our affections after change,
> No hope, so free from sorrow's stain
> Can ever wake the heart again!

The emphasis here is on the "first springs of feelings" which "before the nipping touch of care" are "pure." The first love between Jules and Isoline will always be the strongest and fondest.

Isoline, in return for Jules's freedom, promises to become the property of the marquis. Jules reaches his Isoline through a window after the triumphant marquis leaves. Their plan, however, to escape is thwarted by an ever-increasing storm.

"Their delay is fatal: the marquis returns, he and Jules fight, the marquis is wounded, and Jules is seized by soldiers" (121).

Now that the evil marquis has had a change of heart and feels remorse, a new villain, the slave-driver Synnelet, replaces him in Act II. He desires Isoline who, dressed in male clothing, has arrived on a cargo shipment to the convict fortress in Sinamari where Jules is held captive. Gray has pointed out that both the marquis's and the slave-driver's lust for Isoline are passions of the moment, "brief flarings" that are all the opera offers in the way of sexual passion. The love between Isoline and Jules is represented as an aspect of their shared histories, as a "primal affiliation":

> Oh, what a charm it is to dwell
> On long departed years
> E'en though we recollect too well
> How stained they were with tears.
> And through their days, in fondness nurst,
> Were yet in sadness past,
> For ties that were engender'd first
> Are those forgotten last.
>
> The most enchanting words of all
> That passion'd lip can pour,
> However sweet they be, recall
> But sweeter heard before!
> And throbs which seem the heart to burst
> But echo back the past;
> For ties that were engender'd first
> Are those forgotten last.

Jules and Isoline escape just before the reformed marquis arrives to lament his past evil ways:

> The light of other days is faded,
> And all their glory past;
> For grief with heavy wing hath shaded
> The hopes too bright to last.

The world which morning's mantle clouded
Smiles forth with purer rays;
But the heart ne'er feels, in sorrow shrouded,
The light of other days!
The leaf which autumn's tempests wither,
The birds which then take wing,
When winter's winds are past, come hither
The very ivy on the ruin
In gloom full life displays,
But the heart alone sees no renewing
The light of other days.

In Act III, the escaped lovers, swooning in the heat of the "vast sandy desert in French Guiana," take turns to recover and sing about their love for one another. Just in time, the marquis, unaware who the fugitives are, arrives to save their lives. Once he realizes who they are, he assures them he is no longer their enemy but their friend. He joins their hands together as the chorus adds its blessing:

Cherished for ever be
The feelings now we see,
The smile, all smiles above,
Which friendship lends to love.

(For more information, refer to Gray 120-124.)

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